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Or,

Portraits from Life Framed for Future Use.

BY

REV. L. P. BOWEN.

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TO

THE TEACHING AND RULING ELDERS

OF

PALMYRA PRESBYTERY;

AND TO A THOUSAND SWEET FRIENDSHIPS

BLOOMING LIKE PRAIRIE-FLOWERS ALL OVER

ITS BOUNDS;

THIS MISSOURI BOOK,

BORN OF THEIR SMILES AND ROCKED

UPON GRATEFUL MEMORIES,

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

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CHAPTER I.

ON THE BORDERS.

Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not; until I have showed Thy strength unto this generation and Thy power unto every one that is to come.—*The Psalmist.*

ALMOST beyond the stir of the dying storms of life, I am quietly waiting. Sounds of the earthly conflict reach me still, but their harshness and hoarseness are softening away along the vicinity of the better shore. I have mingled in the conflict long; now the dear people call me old, and I am willingly stepping aside from the struggle. Time was when my heart dreaded the passing of the years. The farther vistas looked icy and stripped and songless and flowerless. For such is the natural feeling in the joyous youthful prime. Now I am glad that so much of the journey is over. I smile upon the flight of time. To the tired pilgrim has come the season of resting before he gathers up his robes and makes his final march.

Where does old age begin? where the line across our lives which entitles the world to call the

survivor old? In childhood, I gazed far ahead, and seemed to see it distinctly looming on the verge of thirty long years. The months flew by, and it began to recede. Until forty. Until sixty. Until seventy. And now I would defer it further still. These eyes have not yet discovered the dividing line. But somehow the people have noticed it, and have found out that I am old. The church have seen that it was full time for their aged servant to have his burdens lightened under the help of a strong co-pastor—one who can do the heavier work and share the care of souls. I am sure that the Lord's own are right. May their setting suns descend among hearts as warm and genial! I submit to their verdict and accept their kindness, and agree that I am old.

Yonder, in the evening twilight, stands the the gray church of my dearest love, where I have ministered through so many years. There my foot-steps first came, timid and trembling, when a young man of twenty-five. The round hill upon which the venerable edifice rises, looks as if shaped by the Great Creator on purpose to hold a temple of the Lord. On all sides sloping gracefully to its base, covered by a luxuriant carpeting of green, shaded by a sturdy native growth of oak and hickory and elm, it forms a brave and beautiful centre to the rich landscapes around. The forest approaches from behind near enough to fling about it its fresh airs and its odors, and throws out its arms to the right and the left as if to claim as

its own the sacred building and its solemn grove ; then it pauses in apparent consciousness of ungenerous rivalry and consents, though with arms still extended, to share the coveted shrine with the open prairie ; while the latter with its sunny waves and dreamy sense of distance, presses into the crescent of woodland and up to the sides of the hill. From the doors, the roads and paths start forth and radiate to the North and South and East and West. Along these are the homes of the people—the peaceful rural homes. Here and there among the forest farms they stand embosomed, and over the open country they rise in more naked beauty: all having peculiar attractions of their own, all vieing with each other in their various charms. The old stone sanctuary, sitting here in its serene soberness, looks out upon these many homesteads as with an air of chastened proprietorship—like a gray patriarch pondering over his clustered group of loving children. Gazing, we grow confident that a great living heart is beating all through the reverend temple, giving it personality and feeling, and throwing out its deep pulsations through all the broad neighborhood around.

About the country church, there settles and intensifies a sacredness of which our city worshipers can never know. No confusion surges up from noisy streets in heartless desecration. The turmoil of earth has broken and died away in the distance. Nature is all sweetly about us in fresh fragrant touches of the Adorable fingers. The winds which

fan our windows, laden with the contributed perfumes of forest and field, are musically vocal; sometimes with sadness, sometimes with Elysian cheer. The birds catch up our songs of praise, intermingle their purer notes, and make their part of the combined chorus as melodious as it was in sinless Eden. The old building itself turns worshiper, and grows eloquent with thought and emotion. So at least it appears to him of whose life it has become a part, whose brain and whose bosom have been so long aspiring within its pulpit and taking shape for the Upper Courts.

The effect is deepened by the gleam of the tombstones across the brook. On the farther side of this pebbly stream rises another hill, adorned with its own trees and shrubbery, and holding silently within its bosom the treasures of many homes. Wherever the living are found, there also must be the dead. Every neighborhood, however pleasant, however healthful, has its graveyard. How many have I helped to lay away beneath those low mounds! The hoary and bent, and the little child; the middle aged, and the ambitious youth; some of whom I shall assuredly meet in a better land, some of whom we bore out from cheerless death-beds. Of a number of these sleepers, I shall have occasion to speak before my tale is done. Nearly all who were members of the church when I came, are resting there. From every one of these surrounding mansions I have seen the slow procession wending. Most of them

paused awhile in the sanctuary for some word of comfort, before the precious dust could be given to earth. Looking back through the years, these roads seem crowded with coffins. There is not a house where there was not one dead. And the old pastor was always there among the mourners, trying like the Master to help in bearing their griefs and carrying their sorrows. To-day, he sees his congregation scarred and thinned, and, but for the true love of the children and grandchildren of the departed, he would feel himself lost and deserted and alone.

Deserted and alone. For, while the homes of my parishioners were often darkened, the parsonage chambers were not spared. So deals the Great Messenger with those whom He would send with balm to others. Grief comes and touches our hearts ; and the Gospel comes and heals. We learn the pang and the remedy. Our own bosoms pierced and bleeding, we bleed into sympathy with the wounded. Leaning upon the good arm of our Beloved, feeling His preciousness to the tried soul, we catch something of His own tenderness and of His tones. I always loved children, thank God ! My bosom always felt for those who were forced to resign them from their arms to the wintry clods. But there melted a difference into my words to bereaved parents, after death had come and seized away our angel Lily, our dear little first-born child. The church had loved her ; the children of my flock had loved her ; my people

wept beside her bier. It was a new and eternal link between the pulpit and the pews. Six children brightened these rooms and were missed; some in tender years, some after they had grown to be men and women. They are all lying yonder among the tombs of my people—all, save one. All, save one!

There are worse things in this world than death. She, our Mary, the pride of those that were left, the sweetest of daughters, gave her heart to a stranger and went to a distant home. Leave father and mother! It is the universal law, and torn hearts must learn to submit. Years of incessant care, of loving watchfulness, of utter self-sacrifice, of hallowed domestic joy; then one who has no claims upon us, comes with a smile and a courtesy, and the cherished ties long tried and deep must yield to the wooings of a day. The old folks are left in their loneliness. The joys of bridegroom and bride are the requiem of delights whose blossoms are henceforth blighted. The new home is built upon the ashes of the old. Again the parsonage and the parish were brought to feel a new tie—the one destiny, the common lot.

Sad indeed, sadder than death! for our darling girl chose unwisely. It pierced us even more deeply than the burial of our poor drowned Willy, drowned upon the borders of a brilliant manhood, and brought home dripping and faded and disfigured from the lake. It is harder still than that sad end to give the chosen pets of our bosoms to un-

worthy arms. Our daughters seem to us so pure. Then to yield them to the embrace of those whom we know to be impure and coarse and bestial, settles upon our heart like a canker, and shuts out all comfort but in God. She alone of our number found a grave among strangers. At intervals, we heard through others of her unhappy life. Woman-like, she endured and made no sign. From place to place he dragged the sufferer, until the struggle was over and she fled to another shore. We heard of a few rapid hours of pain; we heard of the birth of a child, perhaps of two, laid in her arms just as she was escaping from a clouded life. The hard-hearted father gave us no opportunity for seeing her or her offspring. We knew not then, and we know not yet, whether the babe lived or died. It was a cruel deed toward those who had never wronged him, and whom he had stripped of the light of our home. What would have become of us in those darkened years, had there been no God in heaven; had there been no gifts of His grace to earth!

The partner of many joys and sorrows, the mother of my children, was never quite the same after that season of thick shadows. One by one we laid the household over yonder, but she grieved not again as under the one heavy stroke. We saw no rebellion in her gentle soul. There came a gradual weaning from earth, a growing readiness of the weary for rest. After awhile her tender Savior came and took her over to the climes of the

fadeless. He who paused in His dying to provide a home for His own sorrowing mother, now called the mother of my beautiful dead up to a partnership in His own home in glory. And the old man was left alone in the empty parsonage.

My soul does not complain. It is better to have seen them safely over. I believe I had rather feel that they are all together there awaiting my coming, than to have left them behind, not knowing what storms might beat, what temptations might taint. It seems to me that it would have been dreadful to have gone ahead and left any here out of Christ. Yes, I am glad it is as it is. Jesus called our babes and we forbade them not. The older ones all embraced the Savior, and were ready to go. The whole family in heaven, except myself! The partings came thick and tearful, but I can think now cheerfully of the graves and their tenants and the scenes beyond, and feel that I am privileged above the common lot of men.

To-night the spirit of the past is on me. We old folks love our reveries. As evening after evening comes, throwing a misty thoughtfulness about the face of the gray church across the way, and a deeper tinge of pensiveness over the stream among the tombstones, I sit here by my window and dream the old dreams over, and recall in soft review many instances of pleasant pastoral life. It is not strange that I should linger often among the former days. Nor need it be hoped that I should forget the privilege of age to talk over our many

memories ; yea, even at the risk of a restless world's pronouncing us garrulous. I love to take the grandchildren of former hearers by the hand and tell them about their forefathers. In their eyes and ways I see reflections of the departed ; every feature stirs a reminiscence ; every tone recalls a faded scene. Thank the good Lord, the children love me still and are not loth to listen to my words. They are helping my buds and flowers to keep this old heart from waxing gray. They gather often here to see me trim my hedges and prune my vines and nurse my fragrant blooms. It was superlative kindness in the people to refuse to let their aged pastor leave the loved home of so many years. Here I may hope to stay, until the blessed Master summons me to the renewed companionship of those gone before. I love these walks and these rooms even as living things. The smile of my wife has not faded all away. Even as living things, I love these trees and shades and grassy squares. Often I sit here, as now, and seem to see my little ones playing among them in their innocent sports as of yore. There are hours yet sacred to the seeming patter of little feet upon the floors and up and down the stairs. When the sighing wind sinks low, I often hear the winsome prattle, now of baby Lilian, now of baby Jamie, now of baby Mary, now of baby Will, now of baby Esther, now of baby Herbert. The tones are in the heart, if not upon the air. And the old man is not unhappy. He holds his footsteps waiting,

but not impatient to go. The Divine Sympathizer is good enough to keep my bosom full of sympathies for all my people. I know we are dear to each other still. It is God's earthly guerdon to a long life of service. It is enough. This is help and comfort to many a laborious ministerial life—the people's rewarding love and the love of their children.

The days of my public preaching are almost over. The people must listen to another. A pause has come along the outer verge of life. I stand by the brink of the river. I scent the odors upon the other side. These white locks seem stirred by its breezes. The eyes long dim are regaining their clearer vision, as if for a look to the regions where smiles the King in His beauty. I know that my work is not wholly done, or the Master would take me home. Perhaps, I am still to help and encourage the young pastor under his heavy toils. I know that my flock yet look to me for fatherly counsel. I can now and then talk to them of God and duty. And in the many lonely hours that may yet be mine, in times of quiet musing like this, I can silently whisper on paper, and in this paternal way be permitted to do a little good to some needy soul after the old man is gone.

I have learned to see God's hand in everything. This brings cheerfulness to the thought, and brightness to the hope, and warmth to the old heart, too.

CHAPTER II.

CATHERINE MAY.

Her price is far above rubies.—*The Wise Man.*

I WONDER if we preachers are ever entitled to have personal favorites among our flocks. Is it true that loving them in the Lord, we ought to love them all alike—loving them for their souls' and for Jesus' sake? If the pastor shows partiality, it is resented, and trouble follows. Pleasant indeed the ministerial life, were there no selfishness anywhere about us, either in our own hearts or in the hearts of others. But when the world has ascended to that high attainment, there will be no need of preachers at all, except to swell the praise of the Lamb and chant His consummated glory.

Till then, we may expect to find some homes more congenial to the minister's soul than others; homes and bosoms where an atmosphere of God's own loving kindness seems to hover; havens of the heart where we breathe the balms of gentle consideration and warm sympathy; Shunammite resting-places about our earth where the spirits of our dead mothers appear to linger, and where we

feel from the first and all the time a brooding benison of good will and peace. No pastor will miss my meaning long. I cannot own that these special likings are enormously criminal. The wearied Jesus loved to get away from the harsh and unfriendly, take the Olivet path, and follow its pleasant windings through the evening lull to the cordial group in Bethany. We like to think that He who was worse off than the fowls of the air, and so often without a place to lay His head, could now and then lay it in that quiet nest, upon a pillow smoothed by the soft hands of Martha and Mary. I am glad that I am arguing the case so well. Of course, the discreet pastor must be wise enough not to parade his special loves. We will talk only to our own hearts about them, and to God.

One of my dearest lambs has been to see the old shepherd to-day. She threw sunshine all around her as she came. It illuminated her approaching figure while yet in the distance; it shone out before she spoke and smiled. It is a good thing for our poor old earth that she has choice ones here and there, who are divinely endowed with this ethereal faculty of sunshine. It indicates the purer, rarer clay. It tells of a reservoir of soul-light down deep within. The gift of making others happy is a priceless, heavenly gift. It lifts its possessor up toward the high level of the ministering angels. The dear girl never comes and goes without bringing and leaving stronger aspira-

tions after the excellent. The uncultured eye would not call our Catherine beautiful. If some deep heart that knows her well speaks out, it would call her more than beautiful. When she passed out among the flowers at sunset, seeming to brighten them until they forgot that the sun was gone, old Mother Howe, speaking, as is her wont, in Scriptural phrase, followed her fondly with the words:

"How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights—Canticles, seven and sixth."

"But, Mother," I said, "our Catherine is not fair."

"Not, as the world looks at it; not, as the blind see it," she answered. "But as the folks look at it in the New Jerusalem, pastor."

I shall not be content if my readers do not look at it somewhat in the same way before my story is done. True, she is tall enough and graceful enough; nor is there any noticeable fault in her face, nor in the steady, calm light of her blue eye; nor could the artist object to the regular, well-formed forehead, with its waves of chestnut hair rippling away from the lines of thought. But that is not what I mean. Before I began to write, it never occurred to me to examine her features critically. It is always so with those we admire the most: that which touches the soul deepest, is indescribable and defies analysis. A hundred women whom you have known, would rival the external conformation of sweet Catherine.

A hundred you know to-day would be just as beautiful, were they as noble and good. Yet methinks that none but genius of the lordliest gifts could paint her as she is.

You look through my bell-glass yonder, and see the white wax lily, the work of poetic thought and pure fingers, and you scarcely note the transparent glass that comes between. So the physical contour of our Catherine, however imperfect or perfect, is only a transparency through which I would rather that you should look at the white blooms of God's grace within. The spotless petals of my table ornament, the graceful symmetry, the floral inspiration, remind me of the loved one that made them. And it is thus that the attractiveness of pleasant Catherine elevates and transports my better thought up toward Him whose handiwork she is.

It is the beauty we coveted for her at the Throne of Grace on that cloudless Sabbath morning a few years ago, when I held the little girl-baby in my arms and put upon her snowy brow the crystal sign and seal of purity. It is the beauty we thought about on another bright morning in the after days, when we saw her amid the first blushes of maidenhood, taking upon herself the holy vows of consecration, and sitting down, calm and prayerful, among her dear ones at the spread table of her Lord. It is the beauty we have been breathing in the home of the Mays, one of the Bethany homes of which I spoke; and in those

paths of usefulness and self-sacrifice which her girlhood's footsteps soon learned to follow so modestly and gently along. There came a time—but no; that is holy ground; and perhaps no soul but her pastor and her own heart, and one who has passed away, has ever known or may ever know of that. So let it be. It has but left upon her the lovelier tint which a gracious sorrow brings.

"Willy Arton owns that he has been doing wrong, and wants to be a better boy. He says he cannot bear for us to leave him out of our prayers, and I have come to ask permission to make him the promise. His quick impulses get him astray, but you never saw deeper penitence when he sees his error. I believe the grace of God is following him for future good. There was an unmistakable candor in the boy while we talked. Before I go, I would be glad that we kneel together and ask God's smiles upon the orphan."

"If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven—Matthew, eighteenth and nineteenth," murmured Mother Howe to herself, in the kitchen.

The old lady's Scripture came in good place. I was more than usually interested in the boy, and I determined then that the prayers of my Catherine should never lack the prayers of another in claiming the promise in Willy's behalf. The two were agreed on earth.

"You will bear with me," Catherine continued. "There is another who is constantly on my heart. Tom Gaines never comes near the church; if he is ever reached, it must be by some other than the ordinary means. I am sorry that he avoids me as he does, and seems to be afraid of me. They say that I had better let him alone; but I cannot endure the idea of all the community turning their back upon him and leaving him to his doom. When I get near enough to speak, he is entirely respectful and attentive. He has never exhibited toward me any of that violence and bitterness of which they tell me. While talking to him yesterday, the hard suspicious look went out of his face, and he seemed for a moment almost gentle,—he looked at me so pitifully. I thought I was near securing from him a promise to come to hear our new preacher when he arrives; but suddenly the man begged me wildly not to press him too far, and went hurrying away. I believe he has his better moods and a tender spot in his heart somewhere. I wish our people would not ignore him at our altars as an utterly hopeless case."

"He is able to save them to the uttermost—Hebrews, seven and twenty-fifth,"—said Mother Howe, in low soliloquy, as she passed the door.

I suppose that our trustful little maiden was the only one among us all who was carrying the hardened man as a burden upon the soul. It is very sad to think that there should ever be any for whom the children of God may feel it is not worth

while to pray. We need not look far around us without finding those for whom perhaps no intercessions are rising—unconsidered, neglected, passed by, left out. Happy the neighborhood where lives a Catherine May. I encouraged her to go on. It did my old life good to elicit the cares that weighed upon her, and to listen to her sweet voice pleading the cause of the unsaved.

"There has been new trouble," she continued, "in the home of Reuben Wailes, but I do not think the Savior would like for us to despair of him yet. The other day I was passing near his house, when I heard curses and blows and cries. I knew not what to do, but the cries increased and I dare not go by. Hitching my horse as quickly as I could, I lifted the latch and went in. The man was brutally drunk, and looked like a maniac. One of the children was standing near the door with a bleeding wound in the forehead. Another was screaming beneath a table which had been thrown over upon her. Wailes had driven his sick wife, the young babe in her arms, into the corner, and was flourishing a heavy chair about their heads and swearing that he would fell them to the floor. In another instant I believe he would have done it. There was no time to lift the table from the little screaming girl. The man did not see me until, hurrying between him and the weeping mother, I laid my hand upon his raised arm. I shall never forget the look he gave me. His first impulse seemed to be to bring down the enraged blow

upon the one who interfered. I managed to look him steadily in the eye and keep my hand firmly upon his arm. I did not dare to tremble. He bade me away, but I saw in him signs of yielding. 'No, Reuben,' I said, as calmly as I could, 'you must help me raise that table from the body of little Effie.' To my surprise he set the chair down and did as I said. 'Now, Mrs. Wailes,' I spoke again as deliberately as possible, 'Reuben wants his poor sick wife to come and lie down quietly in the bed.' Again the oaths burst out bitterly. 'No, she shall not; she shall get my supper and wait on me, like a dog that she is.' I kept between, and led her to the bed, and he did not oppose. After stilling the boy's sobs, and washing the blood from his face, I arranged the table and fed the drunken man as best I could. Now and then he would explode into wild passion, and hurl his fierce threats at us all. After awhile I persuaded him into his chair, and for an hour bathed his head in cold water until he dropped off into a deep slumber.

"The next day I returned, and found him distressed almost to anguish for what he had done. The gash on his son's forehead was like a scar on his own conscience. 'It might have crushed through; it might have been murder!' he said. 'And my devoted, ailing wife, this is the way I love and cherish her! How shall I ever repay you?' he asked, turning to me. 'By coming to our prayer-meeting,' I replied. 'It is your best

Temperance Society, Reuben. You have tried the strength of your own resolves. You have made pledges to men. Come and seek with us the grace of God.' And he promised that he would. I believe he may yet be saved from ruin. The destroyër has not yet wholly blighted him."

O alcohol, alcohol, ten thousand times more cruel than the bloody wheels of Juggernaut, such are thy wretched deeds of woe. A kind husband and loving father turned in an hour to a fiend! And the dear girl told it all, so absorbed in her interest for him and his family, that she spoke of her part as only a matter of course, entirely unconscious of any heroism in it. Nor did she suspect that she would ever suggest so many vital problems upon my page. It was not often she told of her work for the Master—never perhaps to any but the old man to whom she was bound by ties almost paternal, and to whom she turned for fatherly counsel. She did not know that, in personal Christian kindness and in the grace of God, she was affording the only solution to the great question of effectually reaching the inebriate. I looked upon her delicate womanly hand, scarcely larger than a child's, and I pictured it as it lay in sublimity upon that madman's arm. Soft hand, tender hand, with its carnelian tints and tapering fingers ; little winsome, velvety, beneficent, Christian hand. How easy to have dashed the weak thing away and to have struck her to the earth. Mild, retiring, feminine, she had done a deed of greatness ; and in

her care for others had never paused to consider its magnanimity. It was weakness transfigured into moral might. It was the heroism of the Cross.

I heard in suppressed tones from another room —"Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all—Proverbs, thirty-one and twenty-ninth."

And such was her mission to-day. My Catherine, my Catherine, earth knows no greater comeliness than that which feels and pleads for the frail, the suffering, the sinning. After saying goodbye, and carrying out a large part of the day's brightness with her as she went, she returned to the door to tell me of a hungry lamb which she had seen when coming up the pasture path ; and how the poor little thing was hunting vainly among the flock and bleating inconsolably for its dead mother. She asked permission to take it home and nurse it for me until old enough to feed among the sheep. I saw her seeking the lost orphan and trying to win its confidence with her soothing words. The voice was the same which had calmed the storm in the drunkard's cabin. At first, the lambkin was shy, and flung at her its cries of grief, and kept away ; but her patience did not fail ; and soon it seemed to listen, and mourned less violently, and came nearer and nearer, until it laid its head trustfully upon her lap. The troubled heart knew that it had found a friend. In a little while she raised it in her arms, and did not feel it

shrink away. Womanly kindness had lulled its fears and tamed the hard stress of bereavement. Its instincts knew that it was safe upon her breast.

As she now passed from among my flowers, with their sweet odors flowing out to the warm heart and hovering over her and over the lamb which she carried, her steps turned round to the graveyard and lingered a moment by the gate. And the heart of the lonely preacher attended her very closely and stood with her by the graves. And there, as thou didst pause, my Catherine, with the quieted lamb upon thy bosom and with another unseen burden lying there, hallowed by the promises of the Great Paschal, and white as the fleece against which thy breast was beating—as there thou didst remember and submit and look forward—yes, indeed thou wast beautiful. And so after awhile my readers, too, shall think of thy beauty.

I mean, as that beauty looks to Mother Howe and the folks in the New Jerusalem.

CHAPTER III.

GLIMPSES OF AN IMPORTANT FACE.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me.—*The Christ.*

IT is time for me to introduce our new minister, and thereby relieve my pages somewhat of myself. Such is the natural order. So from the activities of the pastorate there comes this gradual fading of the former worker, and the growing influence of the young and strong. So everywhere, one wave of human life and human effort rolls its course and dies away, and yonder rolls on another, to pass over the same sands and rocks and caverns, and, in its turn, to break and be seen no more. Is there an undertone of sadness in the brave words of the forerunner—"He must increase but I must decrease"? No, no; for he knew of Whom he spoke, and his own true greatness was all wrapped up in the anticipated victories of the Blessed One. And thus in all the revolutions of time and influence, I try to see singly the same growing greatness of the only Great, and to be happy in resigning everything for Him. Be He

but honored and His glory the certain end, we preachers will not shrink from the inevitable lot of seeing other men following us in our churches, occupying the places once dear to us, and crowding us from the minds and hearts of the people; our successors to increase as we decrease. God's years have brought it about, and I go willingly aside.

All this is easy and pleasant, if our chosen successor be such an one as the heart can trust and love. Of course, my soul was thoroughly awake to know the man. Not many ministers will fail to sympathize in that feeling. Into the hands of what kind of a shepherd were my flock to fall? Could he understand my people as I understood them? Could he deal tenderly enough with certain old bleeding sores? Could he easily fall into sympathy with the family peculiarities and weaknesses which I knew so well? Would he have patience enough, consideration enough to prove a fit comforter for the old folks, who, like myself, were drooping toward the grave? Changes of administration in our churches are often very hard on the aged members. And the children, my dear, pliant children, hope of the Church, type of the millennial glory—how would he treat my darlings, Christ's lambs? Of course, I wanted to study the man.

Mr. Calvin Weston reached the neighborhood Saturday morning. A score of families had desired to entertain him. The coming of a new pas-

tor, a young man, too, was an epoch in the history of a church which had lived on in its quiet way under the one preacher for nearly half a century. Mother Howe put our guest-chamber in order, and scattered her Scripture diamonds more fluently than ever among vigorous strokes of brush and broom. Perhaps you do not know what has become so well known here, I forgot to tell it—That, after the wife of my youth and all the precious bairns had gone away in their shrouds, this destitute disciple and her crippled son were persuaded to leave their uncomfortable cottage and make their home at the parsonage. She has been very much beloved. Frequent was the time when some anxious inquirer or desponding Christian might have been seen wending the path to her lowly home and seeking there the consolation which she knew so well how to pour forth in the very words of the Master. Knowing but little of books, except the One Book, humbly born, but the daughter of a King, the old woman is wise with a wisdom of which the vain world knows nothing.

More than one groping soul, having sought comfort in my study in vain, has caught the true light under sudden flashes of Scripture in the kitchen ; or while, in her motherly way, attending the sad visitor to the door. She carries an atmosphere of divine truth along with her wherever she goes. And surely there is no healthier atmosphere for the home of a minister. I hope you will like my old housekeeper.

The secret of Mother Howe's busy bustling did not transpire, until I caught, at intervals, suggestions like these ;—"Eli and young Samuel,"—"prophet's mantle,"—"angels unawares,"—"a cup of cold water in my name,"—"a little chamber on the wall, a bed and a table and a chair and a candle-stick,"—"I was a stranger and ye took me in." Each act of housewifery had its own appropriate text and all pointing in the same direction. Such was her wont in all her work. The more earnest her labor, the more abundant the Scripture. Had not the furniture been as deaf and dead as many in our congregations, each separate article, with its line upon line and precept upon precept, would long since have been thoroughly indoctrinated in the teachings of the Word. It was easy to see where her mind was tending to-day.

But Elder Anson had gone to the Station for the young man, and, knowing he was in good hands, I told the Mother that we need not expect to see him until we should meet him at church to-morrow. He would need rest and quiet before appearing in the pulpit among strangers. The tidy old lady muttered something about Paul and Timothy, and went on as actively as ever, hunting down every speck of dust, and evidently giving special care to the preparation of supper.

Along toward evening, I saw a stranger walking up the road and, when opposite the church, stopping and regarding it attentively. Then he turned

to our gate, lifted the latch and came leisurely up the lawn. I began to observe him with interest. He was of medium size, of good proportions, and moved with deliberate, firm step. You would feel, I hardly know why, that there was character in the step, and in his whole attitude and carriage an indescribable reserve of force. As he drew nearer I saw a good face, his hair dark, his eyes hazel; and taking the general impression, unanalyzed, I think you would not long hesitate in pronouncing him a rather handsome man. Back of it all, there continued to grow upon you latent lurking signs of the intense.

Winding his way up the walk, he stooped and plucked some grass seeds and placed them in the cage of canaries which hangs on my maple tree. The birds did not seem afraid of him. Again he paused by the bed of verbenas, and appeared to enjoy and reflect back the bright looks with which they welcomed him. He leaned over and carefully pulled away a little weed growing at their root. I did not know there was a weed in the bed. There certainly was no weak nervousness about him. All was natural and self-possessed. These apparently unconscious acts hardly interrupted his walk. Were they prophecies of things to come? I began to like the man.

"I have come to show you your boy," he said, as he entered my room, "and to look upon my father. The good people who have care of me, advised rest after my long travel; but I could not

face the morrow until we had met and prayed together, and I had received my father's blessing."

Just enough of youthful diffidence in his manner, pleasant not painful, to enlist my heart the more. Perhaps I was conscious of a subtle flattery, delicate and high-toned in that diffidence. It is not upon record that we old people ever object to a little generous self-depreciation in the presence of the dignity of hoary heads. The days are upon us when the modesty of our young men has come to be exceeding beautiful—beautiful for its own sake—beautiful, I might say, for its rareness, if I were disposed to be unamiable.

I tried to throw into my welcome the same cordiality which had met him at the cage of my birds and the bed of verbenas, assuring him of my wish to see him and of my pleasure in his visit. I think there was already a silent coveting in my heart for the young man's love.

We talked of the scenery, the fair stretch of country all around, the peaceful, happy mein of the farmer's homes, the more striking combinations of effective landscape here and there. He had already taken it in with an artist's eye. I was glad to see he liked the place. The disposition to assume superiority over the society where we are called to live, to depreciate the scenes and surroundings where the Master permits us to honor Him, is an affectation incident to little minds. There is something admirable and ennobling in every acre which God has made, if we are only

noble enough to find it. Mr. Weston was pleased, and was sensible enough to own it. After a while he returned to his first thought.

"My father and mother sleep in the same grave"—he said. "Their orphan, looking at you, is reminded of the white locks once so full of attractiveness to him and now laid together in the burial ground far away. You will let me call you father—will you not?"

You and I have encountered a sentimentality abroad which is simply weak and disgusting. Young Weston was clearly superior to anything like that. After his hat had been removed and I had seen the effect of his full broad forehead combined with the movement of his lips and the lighting of his eye, his face had grown upon me in power all the time. Indications of firmness and energy, suspected at a distance, continued to impress me. I knew unmistakably too that there was heart beneath it all. Summing up the judgment of my intuitions rapidly, I felt that there was something in him out of which to build a preacher. And I was willing for him to call me father.

We had once hoped that our own choice Willie would become a minister of the Gospel, and perhaps stand in yonder pulpit, when my steps could reach the temple no longer. His parents' fond dream ended otherwise. Through a mysterious Providence, unutterably sad and yet not all sad, the answer came another way. The Head of the Church promoted him before his novitiate, and he

ministers to-day by the Throne. I am writing under no ungrateful recognition of the high honor which came so early upon me and mine. The tears have long since dried. He that writes is not the only one who has made consecration like this and found the gift accepted and taken to God's bosom earlier than we thought; some rarer boy set apart to the holy ambassadorship upon a parent's prayers, and called up to heavenly service before the sermon was preached, that sermon about which the mother's heart had dreamed so fondly and so long. I know that for Willie it is better that we dreamed. And now a childless father and a fatherless child meet here to unite their strength and their love in labors for the Master. Yes, the young man is right—We will think of each other as father and son.

He took tea with us. Mother Howe had not been mistaken. I think that nothing could have pleased me more than the courtesy with which he treated the good old housekeeper. His respect and kindness of deportment toward this one of God's poor certainly augured well. Then we knelt together; and the spirit of the holy Sabbath seemed already to be hovering about us, while we looked to Jesus for His favor upon the beginning of the new ministry on the morrow.

"God of the aged and the youthful"—he prayed—"Father of the man and the boy, we dare not touch the ark until Thou bless us. Without Thy smiles, we stop even here and faint and fall. Take

the experience of age and the inexperience of youth and bind them up together for Thy glory. Take the ripe years of the one and the infancy of the other, and make them the early and the latter rain to Thy planted grain. Now let the consecrating oil run down the hair and beard. Thy people in a few hours will want food ; give us good bread for the morrow. Come, Fountain of living waters, burst thou up in our hearts. Then will we convey to others the cool refreshings. Come, coals of the altar fire ; touch stammering lips, and we will talk of the great sacrifice. Father, we dare not move one step toward that pulpit ; Oh Father, we dare not lay one finger on the Book to lift its pages ; unless Thou dost wash feet and hands. The hoary-headed and the prattling child would nestle together very close in the arms of the Shepherd. Thou art sending two to this flock ; we cannot go without the third, One like unto the Son of Man."

I took up the prayer. "God of the youthful and the aged, be Thou the kind Father of us both. The old man, bereaved and stripped, is desolate without Thee. The young prophet, orphaned and scarred already, can not run without Thee. We lay our heads side by side upon one tender heart. We are cheered and go on. God of the Gospel, see this new messenger at the threshold. The young preacher's trembling is felt in heaven. The care and solicitude are meeting responses there. Take him by the hand with Thy

strong grasp, Blessed Savior. Out through the dark, alone by the pitfalls, far on through the wilderness, let him feel Thy leadings. The preacher, old or young, is a failure and a wreck without Thee. In Thee we shall be safe and happy and strong. God of the man and the boy, for the sake of our faithful Promiser, hear the prayer of father and son."

We arose from our knees and saw each other through moistened eyes. I heard from the lips of Mother Howe the words of the patriarch Jacob following him down the road—

"The angel who redeemed me from all evil, bless the lad."

CHAPTER IV.

AROUND THE TABLE.

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.—*The Beloved John.*

THE next morning suffused itself abroad in softness and sunshine. The Sabbath sacredness was early out upon the fields, leaving its lull upon everything. The buds of Spring were quietly bursting as if loth to break the stillness. The growing grass seemed equally careful to make no sound. An occasional lowing in the meadows or the scream of a peafowl from some farm-house, made the holiness of the country silence only the more solemnly deep. A Presbyterian Sabbath was in the air. And after a little, began to spread open to the heavens one of the sweetest pictures that has ever stamped itself upon the old man's heart.

To the wide landscape I look out, and see the tribes gathering from all directions toward their sacred temple. Vehicles of various forms appear along the waysides: the rustic wagons with their

independent owners seated upon chairs or down on the hay in the bottom ; the coaches of more pretension and the brisk bright buggies ; all trotting along through the lanes and saluting each other pleasantly as they pass. Yonder a horseman hastens with quickened speed until he overtakes the rider before him ; another and another swell the group until a large cheerful company reach the ground and are hitching their fat steeds among the trees. Yonder and yonder my healthy rosy lasses ride along with no hurried pace, escorted by their favorite laddies—the same old story ; and now they dismount at the stiles, dropping their riding-skirts with grace, and stepping forth in their comely attire.

As the various arrivals meet at the door, there is a shaking of hands with that bright cheerfulness of salutation which tells of both health and heart. There is nothing rude or loud ; and it is a goodly sight to see these neighbors after their week of separate avocations, recognizing each other with such gladness in the face and such heartiness in the tone. Religion suffers no loss from the genial smile and genial word. The gray church seems to look down well-pleased upon their friendly greetings and to receive her children in the same cordial way as they receive each other. The flowering shrubbery and the tasseled corn are not the only things that grow in beauty upon these fragrant farms.

Here is a large and varied assemblage of immortal souls to be fed. Their bodies have been strengthening upon the strong nourishing products of these broad fields, and their higher natures are looking to the pulpit for food no less substantial. Good physical digestion has entailed no moral dyspepsia. It is a hard heart which feels no sympathy for the young man who comes trembling to the work, burdened with a sense of inexperience, feeling the great needs of his own soul, and compelled to break the bread of life to advanced Christians, who were turning the Bible pages and maturing upon its truths before he was born. Oh ye curious faces, who are to look and listen today, how little ye know what anxiety weighed upon him in his secret room ; what intense solicitude with regard to the message he shall choose from all the Book of God and with regard to the form in which he shall mould it for ear and heart. But he has taken his anxieties up to the sympathizing Master. Others of us were praying too. Was not the young messenger safe ?

Elder Anson came with him early to the parsonage. Before the hour of worship, the rest of the Session joined us and together we walked over to the church—the old man leaning upon the young man's arm. These three are to be his counselors as they have been mine ; his friends and ordained co-laborers ; Anson the gentle and prayerful, Lardner the shrewd and wise, Phales the eccentric but noble and good. I wanted to see their hearts

meeting and mingling. The success and happiness of the minister's life depend largely upon his relationship with this inner circle of advisers which the Bible and the Church supply him. I thought I saw Weston studying each of his Session closely ; and I knew that one at least of the Elders was looking with no shallow penetration into the minister's soul. They all had met very kindly and without embarrassment ; and I looked hopefully to the results of Weston's and Lardner's scrutiny.

The old and the new pastor took our seats in the pulpit side by side. I saw the young man just a little agitated but brave. The hour when in my youth I stood like him in the presence of a waiting congregation, came back to me. Amid that deep, morning memory my soul drew nearer still to his.

The reader is waiting for the sermon. I give it, because it is impossible to know the ministerial soul until you have seen it through a sermon. This chapter is therefore a part of your introduc tion to Calvin Weston, with whom I would have you well acquainted. Even in the selection of texts, there is an index to a man's character. To day it was taken from sweet sad chapters in God's Word—" Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples whom Jesus loved."

" We have all," he said, " received the bread and wine from favorite hands. In a few minutes we do so again. From loving lips, which have so long talked of Jesus, it will be very sweet to hear the

plaintive utterance—Do this in remembrance of Me. Before the aged father handles the symbols of agony, we will go back and look in upon an upper room, still and secluded and with three worlds represented. The Passover is itself passing over into a new Sacrament. The Old Testament and the New are celebrating their feasts together—memorials, both, of saving blood. The type is emerging from its shadow. The true Paschal dies before another sun shall set. The centuries have obeyed and kept the table spread. They could not do without it. The fathers tasted and passed away. The martyrs there got strength for the rock and fagot. The heathen has flung down his grinning idols and taken his seat in pious meditation. The infidel has dropped his vagaries and here become happy in Jesus. Hundreds of generations have remembered Him and passed on up. Over all these scenes of the Church's holy ravishment, stretching like a great miracle down the ages, we wend our way back to that upper room. I see the bread in His fingers—fingers soon to stiffen in death. I see the cup in His hands—hands soon to be torn with nails. I hear the prayer of blessing from His lips—lips soon to grow rigid and blanch for the tomb. 'Take, eat; drink ye all of it.' I hear the fadeless words uttered by Him who spake as never man spake. I sit down in the little group. I gaze upon His brow of love—brow soon to be pierced with thorns. O, poor world, be still!"

The speaker had begun talking in a voice perfectly natural. Referring to the communions of the past, his tones grew deeper and the delivery rather more elevated. After an unexpected pause, suddenly with the words—"I see the bread in His fingers"—he dropped his voice into tones peculiarly tender and low and almost warbling; and under their spell I felt myself and the audience borne along as if seeing with the young man's eyes and moved upon his emotions. Seizing upon the love existing between the flock and their old pastor, he had at the start established a kindly feeling between us all and himself. The success of a sermon depends largely upon winning the attention in the exordium. The audience was with him.

Then, he told us how the world would *not* be still and how that first Communion was contested by the enemy of souls. Even in that little band one was to deny and one was to betray. It is not wonderful that evil thoughts still come uninvited to the Church's feasts. But Jesus was there, and where Jesus is, there is blessedness. Then, the preacher painted a scene which filled our souls with yearning. One in that upper room draws near the Master unforbidden. No wave of the hand puts him back. No cold look repels. No, there is something that wooes, like the subtle charm which draws to one we love when the love burns warmest. They approach; they are close; they touch; the beloved of the Lord is feeling the beatings of his heart. We were told how spirituality of wor-

ship still meets the Master. Believing and trusting, the vapors clear and we have visions of His face. As we meditate, He comes nearer. Longings for His felt presence arise and soar, and lo, He certainly is nearer. We grow to hate the sins that bruise Him, and He still seems nearer. Faith mounts above its clouds, and He draws very near. One cherished assurance of the absolute certainty of His promise ; one child-like realization of His preciousness ; one tranquil wave of holy calm about the soul ; one soft, solemn, peaceful descent of placid, restful trust ; and He is here, HE IS HERE, and we, too, repose upon His bosom.

The reader is disappointed in the sermon. Weston's manner was almost entirely conversational. While inspecting the manuscript to-day, I see the wisdom of God in committing the proclamation of the Gospel to a living ministry. The transfusing of the preacher's soul through word and tone, can not be put upon my page. And that is the soul of eloquence. I know there grew upon us earnest yearnings for a place where John had lain. The audience seemed to accept implicitly the speaker's contagious trust that God was nearer and nearer. You felt that the preacher knew it ; and as the Lord drew closer to the pulpit, He drew closer to the pews.

Weston then talked of John's place as the most exalted on earth. "Herod may fill his palace with the sheen of royalty and the sound of the dance. Cæsar in his pride may sit at Rome on

the throne of the nations. To the child of God, a thousand times higher is the honor accorded to the lowly son of Zebedee. His was a spotless throne, whiter than ivory, richer than gold—the breast of One in whose presence the Herods and Cæsars, of then and now, dwindle into nothingness. A son of the dust leans to him as friend to friend. The baubles of earth burst as we think of it. There is glory in being a Christian. Grace in the soul ennobles. The Bible says it makes us kings and priests. After awhile it gives crowns. The Judases of time may have their pieces of silver and their fields of blood. The ambition of God's aspirants is for a place on the bosom of Jesus."

Then he spoke of this as a special privilege. "I knew," he said, "two children in the same home, with the same parents, the same care, the same love, the same bed and the same table. Yet the one was far more loving and dutiful and happy than the other. So with the children of God—some enjoy far more of the blessedness of religion than others. The same Savior, the same promises, often the same church roll; but some are leaning to the Savior and some are leaning too much the other way. Disciples are still found with Him on the Mount and in the Garden. There are upper rooms, away up above the clouds, where Jesus holds His feasts and where His disciples may sit with Him in heavenly places. The history of redemption still has its Johns and its Elect Ladies. They taste the purer joys of Saintship. Every-

body knows it, and feels that they do. A timid invalid touches the border of His garment. A woman embraces and kisses His feet. A frightened man, faith and bravery gone together, grasps His hand and is succored from the yawning waters. The vesture hem, the weary feet, the outstretched hand are near us yet ; and near us, too, the faithful waiting bosom. I ask you not now if you are Christians ; but Oh, how many of us are within these inner circles of our Lord ?"

I knew them. Some of them, if not all. The pastor soon finds out these inner circles. They help him to preach. They sweeten his toil. Their prayers are as warmth and food and inspiration to him. Like the table-lands and mountain-sides where we may ascend and escape the malarias that breed below ; where the lungs are unclogged and the blood is cleansed and the atmosphere is sweet and bracing, and where the cheek and brow take on the look of health and cheer ; so the soul, too, has its places of elevation, its healthier breathing, its sweeter climes. I looked out over the congregation and saw some of these bosom Christians sitting up there in those heavenly places. They had the faculty of throwing the perfumes of their own upper climes toward the pulpit. The young man will find them out before long. He proceeded :

" That, too, was a place of confidential intimacy. The question distressing the minds of all, was answered to John alone. He was near

enough for whispers to pass between, and the fears of the leaning disciple were relieved. Others seemed to have remained harassed by doubt. So we often find the anxieties of those who are away from His bosom, still left unsatisfied. Darkness haunts the crippled faith. The fearful inquiry 'Is it I?' agitating the soul as it trembles before the Communion board, receives no response from the heavens. Gracious whispers come only to the leaning. Resting close to the heart of Jesus, the trusting soul unbosoms itself of every solicitude, and the still small voice is never slow to reply. Very precious to the disciple lying there, must have sounded the endearing utterances of the next chapter. 'Let not your heart be troubled—I will not leave you comfortless—My peace I give unto you.' Such, the blessed supper-talk. While talking to the troubled heart, a troubled heart at that moment touching His. Two troubled hearts feeling each other's beatings!"

While Mr. Weston was speaking of the place of honor and of privilege, I had been thinking that it is generally God's suffering saints who form the inner circles. I know not what sicknesses or desertions or bereavements may have been John's. In the seats before me, the deeper spirituality belonged to those who had been bruised. Anson, and yonder cripple, and the invalid to the right, and yonder lone widow had all been bled, and I had seen the bleeding. Pews where the inner

circles were represented, showed many vacancies. They had told Jesus of many a scar. And there sat my own Catherine, the calm of peace upon her brow, the peace following a blow that almost crushed. Weston would soon learn to look among the stricken for those who held nearest intercourse with the skies.

He now summed it up in one thought when he said—"The place the disciple held was pre-eminently one of love. They were dear to each other and they knew it. The one had said—'As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.' And in after days the other wrote—'We love Him because He first loved us.' He chooses for himself a designation which seems to have for him a peculiar charm—'The disciple whom Jesus loved.' 'My name, he seems to say, may drop out of the record and die; let me be known by that.' In that he sees his highest fame. He keeps on loving and being loved and writing of love, until love so filled his mind and heart that his loving religion flowered out into the glorious conception—GOD IS LOVE. There is a heart-tie between us and the Throne. Love reaches down and then love reaches up. That is the way He wooes us and that is the way we come. Endearments pass between the Trusted and the trusting. There are looks and tones and kisses and embraces of the Divine. Our Beloved is ours and we are His. We sit down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit is sweet to our taste. His left hand is under

our head, and His right hand doth embrace us. He brings us to the banqueting house and His banner over us is love. Again the beloved disciple is on the bosom of Jesus."

To any one not used to it, it would have been amusing to see Mother Howe nodding her head in vigorous assent whenever the preacher quoted a verse of Scripture. Enjoying all he said, these emphatic nods showed clearly that God's own words scattered through the sermon, were for the old lady the choicest morsels of the feast. To those hungering for wholesome food, from none of his stores can the pastor bring anything so good and grateful as the fresh evergreen sentences of Revelation. Weston now turned his subject over and looked at it from a new standpoint:—

"Who are these," he said, "with bosoms touching? It is the Sinned-against and the sinning, the Holy and the unholy. That leaning mortal was once utterly lost. The grace of the One is all that keeps the other from destruction. That leaning one would now be just as bad as yonder plotting Pharisee, were it not for the love of Him to whom he leans. 'Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.' And even after being chosen, imperfections followed him. Swayed by unhallowed ambition, he joins his brother in foolish prayer for precedence by the Messiah's throne. Fired with ungodly zeal and the spirit of a persecutor, he wants in Heaven's name to burn up the Samaritans. Even yet the death of the One is

necessary for the cleansing of the other. But imperfect and erring as he is, Jesus loves him and invites him to take the bread and the wine. The Sinless and the sinful are sitting side by side. This is the way He conquers sin and saves the tainted soul. Come along, ye who want a Savior, yet are full of stain, come along and nestle close to His heart. The sinner may come to the bosom of Jesus. A sinner has lain there before."

I thought I saw George Winthrop suddenly look up to Weston with unusual interest. George is a farmer of considerable intelligence and one of our almost Christians. For years I have been trying to lead him to accept the fact that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*. George wants to be a Christian first in order to be saved. I was hoping the preacher would follow up the thought, when he did so as follows:

"Who are these that have drawn so near together? It is the Great Teacher and one of His pupils. The word Master means school-master, and the word disciple means one who is taught and trained. John had heard from His lips before —'Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me.' For three years he has been under drill. Now again he is getting some valuable heart-lessons against the day of need. When mind and heart learn together, they learn fast. The true mother with the child in her arms, mixes counsels and caresses, and wooes her darling to the right. The best of all teaching, Christ, too, teaches by love,

He has a place near His heart for all willing learners. The wisest of earth are those who have taken their degrees in His school. The pulsations of the Divine heart are throbbing all through John's Gospel. The Evangelist had felt these pulsations before he began to write. Our best and richest wisdom is found in prayerful communion with the Master. In this way alone we attain unto spiritual insight. We think and study to the best purpose when on the bosom of Jesus."

Our young preacher had struck upon a truth worth more to the minister himself than all the philosophies of earth. After a long life of service, I put upon record my testimony that the only successful sermons I ever preached, were composed while my heart was warm to the Savior. I have long since burned up every one made while my soul was drifting among icebergs. It will not do. The only proper preparation for the pulpit is at the altar. The preacher's power is in his knees more than in his brains. The closet is mightier than the schools. I believe the young man to-day knew what he was talking about. If his sermons shall always be gathered from the bosom of Jesus, this people will not lack bread. He continued:

"Who are these? It is the Messenger of the covenant, and his commissioned Apostle. You know the word apostle means, one sent. Said the Savior, 'As the Father hath sent me, so send I you.' Now, before the fisherman of Galilee starts upon his mission of preaching and writing and living

ing the Gospel, he finds a fit threshold on the heart of the One chief missionary. In a little while he is to encounter trials, hardships, persecutions. On that holy heart, he is getting strength for it all. This hour of honor, privilege, confidence and love, girds him for the onset. The nations are to feel it in his sermons and in his writings. How he will remember it some day! Now, we are all missionaries. Are you becoming a drone amid the bending harvests? The trouble is, you are too far from your God. Have the obligations of the Christian life grown irksome? You have not lately leaned upon Jesus. Oh, for the constraining energies that come from daily contact with Him who is sending us."

Were our ministers and our laity all possessed and impelled by such truths, the world would be turned upside down by the shock. Weston was now burning with animation:—

"Yes, who are these? It is the Lord of glory and an heir of glory. We are looking upon an earthly scene. Ravages of the fall lie thick around. Out yonder are the machinations of the foe. Jerusalem is stirring for the martyrdom. The surges of unbelief have dashed into this very room. Here sits the Lord of earth and heaven, assuring the other of many mansions in another Jerusalem. The leaning one's title is guaranteed by Him upon whom he leans. The death of both is to intervene. Then it certainly comes. Sufferings yet, but peace, troubled joint-heir; I will come to you.

Ah, brethren, indefeasible title-deeds are given on the bosom of Jesus. Resting there, we begin to appropriate the blessedness beyond the stars. We catch a glimpse of the glory. It is the bosom-gift of Jesus. Going forth with John to the turmoil and the conflict, yet having rested with John in the love of Jesus, the earth-born may still join him in saying—'Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.'"

We enjoyed the sermon. Whatever its defects, it was full of Christ. That would atone for a thousand defects. The young man was certainly not preaching himself. That would atone for a thousand more. Under the influence of the truth, we surrounded the table of the Lord.

Weston was only a licentiate, with authority to preach but not to administer the sacraments of the Church. The old man, as in many seasons before, distributed the symbols. The hands that held them shook with age. I told of the time long ago when I shared in the first communion in this house. Few indeed of those before me remembered the hour. I said—"I cannot see a family before me who may not recall a death-bed where Jesus came and gave His bosom for the repose of some beloved head now gone. In the seats where we are sitting, many departed dear ones have sat side by side with Jesus. He is used to being here. He is here to-day. We feel for Him. We touch Him."

I would not talk long. The plate and the cup went round, and I left them alone with their God. I think it is best. I could not bear to break the holy confidences of the hour. To a soul on the bosom of Jesus, there is nothing so sweet as His own whisperings.

The old Temple-service was sublime. The grand ceremonials, the ark and the cherubim, the flourish of trumpets, the ascending incense, the visible presence. But, looking back over many refreshings, I rejoice that there has come to our Church something better than the most imposing ritual. "How shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious." The Ineffable Paraclete descending, and possessing and hallowing the scene, the Church in her simplicity of grandeur has not forfeited her ancient and accredited name—The beauty of holiness.

I love to see the earnest worshiper as he sits calm and abstracted in his pew; oblivious of earth; unconscious of his neighbor to the right or the left; absorbed in thoughts of duty, eternity and God; his whole inner being tending forth toward Him that draws. I love to see him motionless, elevated, rapt—the Divine hovering around and filling the soul. It needs no sigh, no groan, no ejaculation to tell us that. And when not only in one pew but in all, this sublime reverence is felt; when not one bosom alone but many are moving under the presence of Jehovah; the sacred stillness grows until it may be felt, and through that

impressive stillness the devout emotions of the earnest soul rise silently from earth and tend mightily and intensely heavenward.

It was a holy place that day, and the new ministry was well begun. May the young pastor and his people share together through many beautiful years the bosom-gifts of Jesus.

CHAPTER V.

INTRODUCTIONS.

In every house.—Acts v : 42. From house to house.—Acts xx : 20.

A CHERISHED purpose was frustrated. My heart had been set upon a general visitation of my people in company with the young preacher, and upon being myself the one to present their future teacher to all our families. But the late aches returned upon me the day after our communion, and I was constrained by them and by Mother Howe to consent to a quiet week within doors. I did not want to delay his personal acquaintance with the many households even for a day. The sooner a preacher knows his flock, the better.

So I said to Allen Anson: "Take my boy and go in my place. Pass no door by. Before a fortnight, he must know every smile in all this neighborhood and the grasp of every hand. Show him the path to every door, for many will be the calls of joy and sorrow to take him there during the coming years. Prepare him the opportunity for a chapter and prayer in each house you enter.

Establish this precedent at the start, that it may be expected, and that it may be easy for all his future calls to be consecrated and hallowed in the same way. And may God go with you."

I knew that the good Elder had prayed over almost every foot of ground for miles around. It would have been a strange anomaly if any of these households, rich or poor, had missed the privilege of being often borne to the throne upon his intercessions. His voice low and gentle as a good woman's, he seems to have caught his meek mien and mellow tones from habitual intercourse with the heavens. Weston could not have gone under better auspices. At every threshold a petition would wing its way to the skies.

As this is professedly a preacher's story, all my little details will be forgiven. The pastoral work is far more trying than the pulpit. Every parish, however small, is a world within itself. Each church has its own idiosyncracies. Weston was to face a great variety of dispositions and tastes, and was to make and receive impressions. We have all of us gone forth with nervous solicitude to these first calls. I could have given hints and suggestions of character preparatory to each acquaintance; but through my little aches a wiser Providence had left the young man to his own insight and to Anson's prayers. In the end, it would be better so. We old folks are too much inclined to do their thinking for the young, instead of throwing them upon their own resources and thereby

developing the latent powers given of God and ready to stir at His bidding.

I took my seat at the Study window and saw them ride away. It was thus another good man had introduced me around in former days. Here was another delightful instance of eminent piety following on down the line of the covenant. That man of God was Anson's father. The praying Elder then was the father of the praying Elder now. Upon his tombstone over yonder are inscribed the words: "The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." He waits my coming on the evergreen fields, and will help me to an acquaintance with the glorified. Ah me, the two preachers link the past and the present and the future very closely together already. So, in a higher sense, it should always be.

First, they drove to the Mays'. And it was well. No danger awaits them there. No harsh criticism of God's servants; no words caught up and misconstrued; no sharp watching for faults; no suspicions; no ungenerous thought. The father and mother are charming surviving specimens of the old-time lady and gentleman; carrying with them in every word and act that genuine respect for others which is the true politeness; meeting and talking to every guest with as real a courtesy and kindness as if liable at any moment to be entertaining an angel unawares. Whenever God's angel comes to their door, whether they be living or dying, I believe he will meet a welcome

no less benignant and cordial than he received at the hands of Abraham and Sarah on the plains of Mamre. Breathing the same airs with the godly parents, keeping time to the same soul-music, are the only two children God ever gave them; our Catherine and a brother not quite two years younger than she. James was worthy son as she was worthy daughter. Children of the promises, they had both come early into full communion with the Church, borne along assuredly thitherward from the hour of baptism by pious training and pious trust. The same causes ought to be operating, and might be operating, to the same results in every Christian family in the land. How blessed then the family institution and the Scriptural doctrines which cluster about it—our fireside-circles, trees of life whose leaves would be for the healing of the nations. I am sure it was a pleasant hour for our visitors in that circle. I can imagine the looks that rested like the looks of home upon the young messenger. A thought flitted rapidly into my mind, but I put it as rapidly away. What dreamers we old people sometimes get to be!

I saw our two friends ride over to the large house on the farther hill. It is the most imposing residence in all the country-side. For various reasons, the Sheldons are people of influence. They have no lack of this world's goods, and are liberal in bestowing them. With refined tastes, abundant means have given ample oppor-

tunity for their culture and gratification. Mrs. Sheldon, two daughters and one son are in the Church; Mr. Sheldon, one daughter and two sons are not. I felt a little anxious there for my boy. They are a hospitable but very proud family; and this pride reaches to their relations with the church itself. They are proud of its name, proud of its history, proud of its prosperity, proud even of the building, and proud of our ministers as contrasted with others around. Perhaps you have met the Sheldons. They have real piety and good sense and warm hearts; but an ungrammatical word from their pastor, or a thread-bare coat, or a spot on his linen, or any rudeness of personal deportment, would wound their sensitiveness to the quick and impair his influence for good. They recoil from the vulgarity of dress and of demeanor on the part of ministers of other sects, and would be sincerely shocked by any such degradation on the part of their own. Preachers do well to cultivate a conscience in this regard. In all our congregations are likely to be found persons, to whom the least untidiness of habit or lapse of clerical dignity would constitute a serious offense and a prostitution of the sacred office. I knew the Sheldons had always been more indulgent in this respect to the old pastor than they would be toward any one else. When Anson and my boy left the veranda, I noticed that several of the family followed to the gate and saw them to the carriage.

They rode to the Smiths'. These are the two

maiden ladies who own the cottage in the grove beyond the Sheldon mansion. Nowhere could be found two souls more devoted to their church, and nowhere could you find two sisters more diverse in their way of manifesting that devotion. Let me leave the reader for a while to his own impressions, as Weston was left that day to his. I give a part of the conversation as it came to me in the months following:

"You have come to a hard charge," said Miss Nancy. "I fear you will soon grow discouraged and want to get away. No wonder our old pastor has broken down. He has had mighty few helpers. I pity the preacher who takes the burden."

"Why, Nancy," answered the other, "our church has never failed to prosper. Our pastor loves us all, and we all love him dearly, and we live among the best neighbors in the world. And everybody was pleased with Mr. Weston's sermon last Sunday, and we are all getting ready to love *him*, too, with all our might."

"Well, it is sad to see so few coming to our prayer-meetings, and I know that will be hard on the young preacher. Had it not been for Brother Anson there, they would have been dead long ago."

Weston had to say something. There are people who love to force the minister into a corner. "It is generally a select few of God's own," he answered, "who really love the prayer-meeting."

"I have thought our meetings have been growing very sweet and precious of late"—said Miss Hope charmingly.

"Some of our young members are acting very badly," persisted Miss Nancy. "They seem to think about everything else more than their religion."

"Do the young ladies still meet regularly at your house?" asked the amiable sister, of our Elder. The question was evidently designed to elicit a sedative.

"As regularly as the evening comes," he replied. "It would take darkness, dense indeed, to detain Catherine from her little Bethel."

"I heard our pastor say," continued Miss Hope, "that nothing this side of heaven helped him so much to preach as what he called 'his two lights'; the light which he sees shining out from the young ladies' place of prayer on Friday night, and from the young men's on Saturday night."

There was no difficulty in finding an answer now. "It must be a great comfort truly," said Weston; and there dawned a gladness upon his features as bright as if those two lights had shone full in his face.

"Yes, if they would only live up to their profession out-doors," returned Miss Nancy. "But with the example set them by the older members, it is no wonder. Brother Anson, how much are the Sheldons going to give under the new arrangement about salaries?"

The question was an unfortunate one; but Nancy couldn't help it. It is strange that people will persist in discussing the question of salary in a

minister's presence. Anson was equal to the emergency. "I have not inquired," he answered. "But it is all subscribed; subscribed promptly and without trouble."

"Mr. Sheldon is not a member," remarked Miss Hope, "but he has laid us under many obligations by his liberality toward the church."

"I have had my fears," suggested the other, "that none of our families will feel it their duty to board our new pastor. It would be too bad if those so well fixed for it, should feel an indifference about it now."

Unfortunate again. We preachers do not care to hear ourselves discussed as a burden of charity.

Anson quietly smiled.

"Oh, never mind, sister," urged Miss Hope beautifully. "I know a nice little room which my sister herself would make neat and cozy, and then almost kill the minister with her good cooking."

And she would too—even to the greatest inconvenience. Kind and meaning well, but always seeing specks of cloud in the clearest sky, and possessed by a disposition to supervise everybody and everything with a rather ungracious watchfulness, she had a zeal for Christ, but not strictly according to knowledge. She meant no harm. Nancy was not aware how unpleasant it is for a minister upon his visits, to have all the black soil of the community thrown in his face. God, in His infinite variety of working, often brings wonderful contrasts together within the same doors.

While one sister was always desponding, the other was always cheerful; always looking to the bright side of everything; always seeing some good trait in everybody and prompt with a pleasant word. There was never a jar between the two sisters, although they differed so widely. The one was a living antidote to the harm which the other might unfortunately do. In their different ways, no two warmer friends will Weston have in all his large charge.

Farther on to the right, retired from the main road, and in one of the hollows that made up from the Gorge, sits an humble dwelling, small and ancient and lowly. For no consideration would I have our callers pass it by. No, they turn in and are dismounting. The little yard is clean and grassy, variegated with patches of flowers. Vines of different kinds are trained over the doors and all about the unpainted windows. In this way God enables His poor to adorn their unpretending dwellings without money. Some of the sweetest homes I have ever seen, were the cots of the industrious, pious poor.

Here lived the Valeys, father and mother, and six children—subsisting by honest daily labor. By this time they might have accumulated a little property, but somehow, whenever this seemed to promise, sickness came and threw them back upon their daily resources. One invalid daughter had lain upon her couch from early girlhood, a meek and patient sufferer. Few of God's mysterious

providences have puzzled me more than the presence of so many of these life-long invalids in the dwellings of the indigent. Affluence could bring to parent and child many comforts. God puts them instead where care and want press heaviest. And yet were we to ask the Valeys, which of all their children have brought them the most happiness, I suppose they would point us to sweet Nelly. One sentence from heaven explains it all; Whom He loveth, He chasteneth. So God loved the Valeys. And so He taught them tenderness to every sufferer. Wherever in all the community disease and pain were known, there you would find the Valeys. After hard days of toil, they were prompt to every sick-bed, ready to watch the long night through, and go back to hard work at sunrise. Sick children cried for them, and we old people were almost as bad. No money to bestow, none perhaps in the whole church were more useful. I suppose that these warm sympathies were born of Nelly's pains.

Yes, go, young pastor, and help to irradiate the cottage where the blossoms love to grow and the robbins love to rear their young. In your visits to the sick and dying hereafter, you will thank God for such heaven-commissioned helpers as these. And if disease shall ever strike your own broad shoulders down, you will thank Him again for your acquaintance with the Valeys.

My eye followed the visitors back from the obscure dwelling and on to the house of flaming

red beyond. The wheat and the tares still get into the same little fields. The lovely and the unlovable are often next door neighbors. I do not know why Jake Askins should ever have found a place in the Church of God. Coming among us some years ago an utter stranger, he soon proved himself unworthy of confidence, yet succeeded in insinuating himself into the favor of one unsuspecting feminine heart. Everybody else distrusted him. That one doomed heart stooped down and became enslaved. The sex are so prone to idealize a plausible stranger. Her family used every legitimate means to break the infatuation; and, when they failed, they mourned as many others of us have been called to mourn. In evil hour, she tied her life to one far beneath her. I do not like to describe him. He has no idea that I know him. For the sake of possible future good to the soul, we ministers are often constrained to be outwardly ignorant of many things we know too well. We have to put away the impulse and appear to receive, at their own valuation, people whose characters we have fathomed and loathed.

At one time the cloak of penitence was so cleverly put on that we received Askins to our communion table. His wife wept tears of joy, and other hopeful ones among us mingled our tears with hers; but no note of rejoicing was heard in the presence of the angels of God. He will receive Weston with demonstrations of kindness,

and counterfeit the deepest interest in him and in his future work. With a passion for prominence, he will seek to attain it by depreciating everybody else. He hunts and gathers all the gossip for twenty miles around, and treasures it up into a magazine of evil omen to all the neighborhood. Every heart-burning and every old grudge among the people, supplies him employment and recreation. Unless the young preacher is upon his guard, he will adroitly instil prejudices against every family in the church. An adept in this art may often implant an incipient aversion which it will require years of pleasant acquaintance to efface. Every new pastor must be guarded against these subtle misconceptions of his flock. He is to share in none of the dislikes which individuals in a community may feel toward each other and to which they may be inclined to make him a party. Such taints of thought and feeling may come in very stealthy guise and be inspired by associates of far better character than Jake Askins. I felt relieved when I saw our friends ride away.

I could watch them no farther. They passed over into the woodland. I ceased to follow them; but for a close to these introductions I had two schemes of my own. There the old man sat alone and silently thought them out. Reports from the parish frequently reached me of pleasant impressions of the preacher; and Mr. Weston came every day to report progress and tell of his

growing interest in the field. To increase my gratification, I learned of a good purpose quietly effected by Anson. The home of the young man was to be with the Mays. In the Elder's noiseless way, it had all come about. It was the one best arrangement, and yet for a moment the old man was weak. When certain thoughts arose upon me, surging down from the past, I own that the first and last emotions of jealousy toward my young colleague passed through the aged bosom. I say jealousy, for I am at a loss for the word. There is a tie between Catherine's life and mine which is very sacred and with which for a moment I felt that no mortal had a right to intermeddle. The weakness passed, and my heart was glad of the good management of our man of prayer.

And now when the busy days were over and the calling done, I put my first pet plan into execution. Anson had done his part well, but I did not feel that the introductions were yet through. So I claimed a bright, cloudless day of Weston to spend with me near the parsonage among that large assemblage who had no vote in what was now passing: who could hear no syllable; who could speak no word. No word, save as their silent voice shall be heard in benedictions upon the church they loved; benedictions interpreted through the faithful memory of the old pastor who buried them. I wanted to introduce him to the dead. No man can know the living until he knows their dead. In every pew there are finer

traits, peculiar shades, delicate leanings, deeper depths, and especial needs, which can never be fathomed until we understand something of the lives of those whom they have loved and lost. Here in this place of intense repose, lies the clew to many personal peculiarities and apparently causeless events, which can never be explained in any other way. So we walked over and spent some hours among the graves.

These were not gloomy hours. I think I succeeded in making them as cheerful and pleasant to Weston as his visits to the living. Less of anxiety surely, less of fear as to uncharitable opinions. Here, at least, would be no harsh comments; no tale-bearer to rise up when we were gone and prate of evil said or done. I have lived very close to these sepulchral bones for many years, and our intimacy has been great, and I can say for them that no one has had more peaceable and better neighbors than they have been to me. I feel it so more and more, as I draw nearer to them in expectancy every day. While these quiet sleepers were to breathe against the young man not one ungenerous reproach, I desired that their voice should be heard in solemn pleadings for fidelity to the busy dwellers above the ground. And thus I presented him to cluster after cluster of tombs, and told him of their history and relationships, and of the waves of influence that did not die with their deaths.

The trees were alive with song, and the hedges with the insects' chattering hum. Nature smiled abroad as blithely as if the youthful Spring had as yet received no hint of the power of the great destroyer. With all things bright around, we studied together the philosophy of the living. Our teachers were beneath the growing grass. And when the sun was setting and we were parting at the parsonage gate, the young man turned away with a new pressure in his hand and clear drops as of dew upon his face. The preacher would lose nothing by looking forth upon the waiting vineyard through those pearls of manly feeling.

CHAPTER VI.

THE YOUNG FOLKS.

To the weak became I as weak that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some.—*The Apostle.*

MY second project also was soon consummated. I knew but one obstacle in the way. That difficulty must be prudently met and carefully removed, or my designs must be abandoned. Many of our plans, however reasonable otherwise, had better be dropped and buried forever than that they give offence to any of God's children or become the occasion of dissension. I have seen ministers start enterprises that were right enough in themselves, and zealously press them through over adverse opinion, and count them successes; when it would have been far better for their future influence and the Gospel cause, if they had read the sentiment aright, and discreetly resigned their purposes into oblivion. Many apparent triumphs are virtually sad failures. The pastor who has not grace and tact to shade away differences of thought and feeling, and wield the prefer-

ences of his people as a unit, does well to beware of his hobbies and crotchets.

Conservatism had taken bodily form in the person of Elder Phales. He was antiquity incarnate; one of those good souls who live and breathe in the olden times, firmly believe in the superiority of the past, and walk through the present suspicious of everything unstereotyped. Seeing a constant tendency of current days to rude insurrection against the sacred customs of fifty years ago, he is ready to die for them in the breach. His house is old-fashioned; his carriage is old-fashioned; his furniture is old-fashioned; his Bible is in old-fashioned binding; and his wife and sons and daughters are in binding similar. Earnest piety, kind hearts, ready hands, good and staunch and tried and true; but all in an old-fashioned way. John mourns over the levity of modern society, sees it continually assaulting the churches, poisoning the worship, and undermining the ancient awe and reverence. He is a living protest against all the high pressure sensationalism and smart expedients of the religious strategists of a fast age. Underneath all is a strong mind, a fine vein of eccentric humor, and a zealous desire for good which saves him from being unreasonable and factious. But across the rash march of suspicious innovation, there stands sturdily the stubborn fact, the unmistakable fact—old John Phales, the rear-guard of the vanishing forces of the good old times. I suppose we are all safer because of these strong anchors. In this way God

lays His hand upon a rapid century and holds it back. I am myself old enough to know that these grey-headed fathers and mothers are entitled to high consideration; that their venerable scruples ought not to be ruthlessly trampled upon. Their regard for the worship of their youth is a conscience.

"John," said I, "I have been thinking about that nutting party which I believe you led just forty years ago. It seems but yesterday. What a spry young man you were! In a few days you gathered the neighbors, young and old, from all the country around, and marshaled them to the fun. Do you remember it, John?"

"It was there I won as good a wife as ever set a table," he answered. "Dressed in their homespun, and rosy from their looms and wash-tubs, the girls were worth something in those days."

"The woods soon resounded with pleasant greetings and innocent laughter. I seem to see the joyous groups as they scattered out and entered into zealous rivalry in gathering the wealth of the hickories and pecans. We were then as young as anybody. None there could climb the big trees and mount from limb to limb as you did that day."

"Sally was looking at me," said John.

"Your young parson was at first afraid to go. It might be considered derogatory to his dignity. But nothing could content you and the rest of the youngsters until he consented to be one of the

number. Many pleasant ties between preacher and people dated from that old nutting conducted so admirably by young John Phales."

"We could enjoy ourselves in former times without the silly dances and imitations of dances and foolish frivolities which now must spoil everything," said the Elder. "Nothing was there to cheapen any preacher. We didn't want anything of that. There was sense enough among us to choose the right and let the harmful go. It's a pity we can't have it so now."

"I believe it might be so, if you and Sally would put your heads together as you seemed to do in that season of your youthful prime."

"Sally can do anything," he boasted.

Thus I caught John by guile. Step by step it came about. In some unofficial way I had desired to bring Weston into contact with the Sunday-school and all our young people, in the midst of the week, that they might meet without formality and mingle together without reserve. Our parishioners were widely scattered, and seldom met except on Sabbath. Their occasional social entertainments brought together only certain circles. A pleasant reunion of old and young and rich and poor would do us all good. John was rather afraid; hated religious frolics; dreaded the lugging in of some of the prevalent vanities; liked Weston, but didn't know how far the young pastor might be tempted to go; better hold him in safe limits for a while yet; preachers were not what

they used to be (a compliment to me); had no patience with the dragging of the world topsy-turvy into the Church; and wanted here none of the man-made schemes for obliterating the lines of separation between solid piety and its painted substitutes.

Thank God for these firm, immovable landmarks, grey boundary stones, hoary rocks rising boldly up on Zion's coasts against the frothing tides of ecclesiastical dissipation!

Phales knew that we did not differ widely, and the concurrence of his wife helped him to trust me. She would be with us, and in his mind her dear old-fashioned presence would work powerfully as an exorcism of evil. Though not opposing my purpose, he yielded his consent, with continued testimony against the modern vanities. Still fearing the possible occurrence of something which he could not approve, he asked me not to expect his attendance. Of course I consented, although it would have been a gratification to have him with us. Otherwise, he left it all in my hands.

I sent for Richard Phales, Mary Sheldon, Susie Winthrop, Catherine and her brother, and made them our committee of arrangements. One of the sweetest forest scenes in all the country was selected as the place. May would soon be melting into June and the woods be laughing with bloom. I have never missed an opportunity to cultivate the taste of the young for flowers, and through them to draw out the juvenile thought toward the

God of the beautiful. If these lovely playthings of smiling Nature appear again and again along my chapters, the reader must not tire of them. It is the life I live. They were a part of my mother's religion, and they have been a part of mine. Ours was to be a Floral Festival. The human blooms from all the homes around were to meet together for the purpose of hunting and gathering and arranging the sweet products of God's sylvan gardens.

The day had come like a dawn of the golden age, and the hills and valleys seemed to think so too and to feel an ecstacy of life and health. The breath of the two fascinating months is meeting in rich balms, and whisperings are passing over the landscapes from one to the other; May beckoning unto June, and June sighing unto May. Each tree and sapling and bush and shrub has donned its holiday attire, all fresh from its morning toilet and waiting to welcome into fragrant shades the arriving guests. Bryant is right. Nature adapts her fellowship to every mood of the human soul. To-day it is a voice of gladness. These rounded elevations and graceful declivities seem to have had a hint of our coming and to have emerged from their dewy slumbers all elate for whole-souled receptions. They have been to me the most constant of friends, and I have learned to think of them all as possessed of living sympathies. How many the rambles I have had through these groves; sometimes with dear ones who walk here no more,

sometimes alone with my meditations and with God. In haunts like these, in companionship with the Great Designer, sermons have often germinated from some good seed, waved their broad branches, burst into Summer foliage, and borne ripe fruit, as silently and naturally and easily as these willing trees. And often they were the freshest and most wholesome of my sermons. The fields and the forests are never so beautiful and so suggestive as when seen through devotional eyes.

I wish I could put upon my page the scores of happy faces. This chapter should remain unwritten, and I would give the reader instead a gallery of pleasing countenances—whole bright clusters of them. Happy faces, wherever we find them, God bless the happy faces! They have come and beat my woodland flowers in competitive beauty. There is no picture in all the world so winsome as the look of darling happy features. What would our earth do without them! The children's merry, transparent, sparkling faces; young manhood's and young womanhood's expectant, eager, romantic faces; fathers' and mothers' loving, devoted, holy faces. I would like to write a book and make it one great album of cloudless, innocent, happy eyes and lips and cheeks and foreheads. Every leaf you turned should show the peerless smiles of peaceful heaven-gazing Christian faces—like the Lamb's Book of life.

The old pastor, one of the first on the ground, formed a center for the gathering crowds. Arrival

after arrival, until it was evident that the farms were indeed deserted, the labors in the crops unanimously intermitted, and the hired help as well as all others permitted to share the common pleasure. This had been my own quiet suggestion, and the people seemed desirous of humoring the old man to the uttermost. Perhaps they were feeling it to be the last time he would ever join them in scenes like these. Where I sat, under a broad patriarchal elm, they came about me, until the large company almost covered the principal hill. When the greetings seemed to have been general and I knew it was full time to break the crowd and scatter it out over the impatient woods, I called the children and told them that the wild-flowers were waiting.

"Away to every stump and hillock and nook and corner," I said, "where the dear little blossoms are already at their games of hide and seek. Bring me by dinner time whole armfuls of the blushing treasures. We will see who of all these girls and boys will find me the prettiest and sweetest. You must be in no hurry either. Play as you go in every fancied grot and bower, and rival the loud blue-jays with your laughter. It will not do to let a frown or a harsh tone disgust the squirrels to-day. And the older children, too, may take the hint and parcel themselves out as they please."

CHAPTER VII.

UNDER THE TREES.

Mountains and all hills; fruitful trees and all cedars; Both young men and maidens, old men and children; Let them praise the name of the Lord.—*Psalm cxlviii.*

THIS was all that was needed. The large party split and separated and dissolved itself away into a hundred joyous fragments diverging in all directions upon their various strolls. Soon every path and avenue and grove and coppice had its own companionships of twos or threes or dozens, according to some occult law of elective affinity; and all unwholesome conventionalism was gone.

Where was Weston? I own to a little disappointment. All this was arranged far more for him than for myself. Frequent inquiries were passing among the people, and nobody could answer. He had manifested an interest in our holiday, yet he seems the last to come. He does not appear to be a man who would stoop to little unnecessary freaks, or who would keep us all in suspense for dramatic surprises.

Mary Sheldon has collected a large flock of tiny little ones, as merry as a flock of birds, and is teaching them to hunt the flowers. Mary is a first favorite with the babies and the toddling almost babies. She has taken possession of about twenty of the latter, male and female, whose feats in walking and talking are very remarkable—as every one of the parents knows—and who are making their first explorations to-day, in the cause of science and the coming generations, 'mong de big tees and ite down on de deen dass.' From their mothers, Mary has demanded and secured entire exemption for the day from all reminders about the tearing or soiling of clothes. No word is even to suggest the legalism of the nursery. Mary has become their surety and, if any mishap occurs, the scolding is to be visited vicariously upon her. So early are babes and sucklings parties in interest in the great doctrine of substitution.

Here now is one of the sweetest, sweetest groups of my happy faces. The birdlings in their leafy homes among the branches, peer over the sides of their nests, recognize their rivals, shake their puzzled heads, and wonder what it means. How vast the commotion in Lilliput when some hiding blossom is discovered, or when a half-dozen of the explorers go tumbling down the hill! It requires no mean generalship in the busy Mary to keep her forces in hand and to prevent the foragers from straggling. And you and I do not know which to admire the more, the sparkling joy of the little

ones, or the goodness of the maidenly heart which finds so much pleasure in the happiness of the children.

Some other thoughtful heart had secured an easy vehicle and arranged a soft couch and brought to the grounds our weak invalid, Nelly Valey. As there you see her the first time for many long months, lying underneath the umbrageous canopy, unable to walk one step, but watching the rambles of others without a cloud across her pale brow, a calm gratification beaming from every feature, while flashes of sunlight came flickering through overhanging foliage and lay rippling about her couch, you will not hesitate to reckon hers too among the happiest of my happy faces. It was not difficult to surmise who was the lovely cause of this bright epoch in the girl's uneventful life. Talking with the patient Nelly, pointing to each scene of interest around, by her own pleasant attentions more than compensating to that grateful bosom for the inability to follow the active crowds, sat our Catherine. Yes, I knew very well who had secured for her this day of unexpected pleasure. I went and sat down with the two.

Yonder at last comes Weston. And who is it seated beside him as he rides? Who is it but old John Phales! My Catherine and I exchanged smiles full of both wonder and gratification. If John could have known our delight, I am sure that he would have felt richly repaid for the sacrifice of his resolve. The world would oftentimes be-

come a hundred times brighter, if we were all willing to lift from the lives of others the shadows of our pampered theories and prejudices, and the rigors of a selfish consistency. We ought to see to it that our opinions do not sit as a nightmare upon the bosoms of our fellows. John was right in watching against the influx of the world's vanities, and he was right too in stopping short of fanaticism. As he came to us to-day, with some of the eccentric humor flashing through, I loved him just a little better than I had ever loved him before.

"Our brace of preachers are too young to trust alone in such a crowd," he said. "I am needed here to watch you both and see that you are not too frolicksome. I expect I am to have a harder time of it than even poor Mary over yonder among her little bedlam."

That was all. The dear old fellow evidently needed a holiday, a healthy bending back to the days of childhood, and Weston had wisely prepared the way. From an early visit to one of our sick, only the more upon the preacher's heart because of the general joy, he had made it convenient to return by the Elder's. The old disciple was far away in thought among the exploits of his early manhood—in memory a young man again. In that hour of musing there was but a narrow remove between him and the youthful throng in the woods. The intervening years had faded out and he poured forth full many an incident of his past

upon an appreciative ear. The wary pastor thus delayed from our party, claimed the Elder's company in order to break the awkwardness of a late arrival and to help in bringing the innocent pleasures of long ago into our present entertainment. The heart was already willing. Unconsciously it was coveting again the gambols of the young. Over John's whole demeanor rested a softened look which I had never seen before. Thousands of warm, noble hearts beat behind staunch old beliefs—the beliefs the better for the hearts, and the hearts better for the beliefs. There is no conflict between noble creeds and noble bosoms.

The whole forest was alive with pleasant sounds. After a while, I said: "My son, it is time for you to be mingling with all of yonder joy. They will listen to you only the better for it on next Sunday. John and Nelly and I will stay here and rest, and oversee the whole. Go, Catherine, and help my boy to know the other boys and girls."

No hesitation. They rose and passed away among the trees. Her chaste dress of brown calico looked well against the forest green. Her head came just a little above his shoulder. They talked as if they had been acquainted long. Nelly's eyes followed them with a serene loving smile. That gentle look rested over them like a benediction.

John was inclined to talk. In sight was sitting the good mother Phales among a company of five or six matronly neighbors under the shade of a matronly elm. The calm of a sedate friendship,

long recognized and confirmed, was visible all about the white lace caps. The Elder saw them and was at once back in his one ancient romance. I encouraged the story for the invalid's sake, and soon she was enjoying with zest his quaint description of the wooing and the winning of his Sally. Half a century is gone, and a faithful bosom still beats as true as ever to the first and last enchantment. It is delightful to see the old man constantly devising little household conveniences for her, his aged hands employed in contributing to her room or her work-basket some gift of his skill, as full of affection as when his soul was in its honeymoon. Were I writing a love story, I do not know but I would choose as my hero a man with as firm a character in as rugged an exterior as old John Phales. God often puts the true jewels of lasting tenderness beneath such honest settings. Your novelist forgets to look for them there.

I left them for awhile. The speaker and hearer did not need me longer. I knew a retired place where some rarer blooms loved to grow, and I thought I would bring them to my pale lame girl. Here and there, to the right and the left as I passed along, I saw my younger and older children seated in beautiful groups, or playing among the groves, or running from point to point with exhilarant exclamations over new-found floral beauties. It was one continued panorama of gladness. It is a good God that makes young hearts to beat that way. Suddenly in turning a knoll, a pretty

tableau presented itself to my view. Four or five young ladies, from fourteen to sixteen years of age, an entire class in the Sunday school, were sitting in a natural alcove, platting the forest vines and arranging their gathered flowers into various tasteful devices. No cluster of fabled wood-nymphs could have appeared so beautiful. From my feet the grassy ground arose in easy acclivity to the place where they were sitting, holding up the group in pleasant prospective before me; while thick verdure of delicately intermingled tints formed a pleasing background, and large trees to the right and left, festooned with trailing drapery and arching overhead, supplied my picture a rustic framing beyond the reach of art. It was an exquisite nest of budding graces. Oh that these young hearts may ere long be given away to the loving Jesus! Nothing else is needed to make their youthful lives lovely indeed.

Rose Arton had risen and was just fitting a wreath to the brow of one of her companions, when Catherine and Weston came opportunely upon the scene. My boy must have been ingratiating himself very rapidly into favor with our young people, for no sooner did he appear than the girl upon whose forehead the chaplet was being laid, called out, "No, no, Rose, we will crown our pastor with it." He yielded immediately to their conceit, and raised his hat. Rose faltered, a little diffident, a little confused, but was forced to the coronation. Stepping gracefully upon the stump by his side,

she adjusted the wreath to his brow. The blush mantling her cheek did not detract from the interest of the scene. I think a new color responded from his, as he bowed to her and the other laughing maidens. The orphan girl never seemed more attractive. Unobserved, I looked at her and at Catherine and at Weston, and passed on my way with the picture fixed upon my mind and often to be recalled in the after days.

In due time the loud horn blew the signal for all to return. The white table linen had been spread in long line upon the cool green grass, and covered with a royal feast. The guests were kept waiting only long enough to arrange our ton of flowers. They were distributed from end to end of our primitive table and upon every surrounding bush. Weston's and mine were laid upon Nelly's lounge. Our chosen dining hall was fragrant with many perfumes and decorated beyond the reach of painter's brush. What an appetizer is harmless joy and open air! Never was food from the Great Provider more relished by the throats of happy birds, mingling their feasts with songs. It was pleasing to see a number of our friends especially attentive to the hired laborers and to the poor and diffident. There were watchful hearts who would not see any sensitive nature neglected. Among these I was glad to notice our preacher. First or last during the hour, some happy remark was addressed to everybody on the ground. The tact of saying an appropriate, genial something to all we meet, is a

blessed gift for the pastor. Weston's chief attentions were to those whose lives were most barren of good things and those whose bosoms had bled of old under imagined slights. And the children, legitimate gormandizers, he would have filled to their palates.

"Rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate—First Timothy, six and eighteenth," murmured Mother Howe. Her application of Scripture was generally correct. At least those addicted to motto-texts, will have no right to complain of the last.

There came a lull in the entertainment. The provisions were cleared away; much of it reserved and gathered into baskets, adorned with bouquets, to be sent to the sick and to such families as would otherwise have no such viands to-morrow. All at once the voice of John Phales was heard: "My old legs can outrun any of these girls or boys on the ground. Strike out for yonder clump of hazel." At first a pause; and then in a moment Weston had urged out a score of contestants, and away they dashed after the old man. He had gotten the start and made good his words. And then such a shout and hurrah broke forth from the enthusiastic throng as made the deep woods ring again and again. I knew then that our Elder's testimony against evil would nevermore fail of the becoming respect.

The example was set and we were all soon mingling in the plays of the children. The young pastor was a very genius in devising a succession of

popular recreations. The oldest and most punctilious unbent and yielded to the contagion of youthful gladness. I thought of Sheldon's pride just in time to see him hand in hand with a circle of girls tripping around Weston as a centre. Thus the time flew by until the sun was hurrying to the West.

The quiet Anson passed here and there through the crowd. To him there was another coveted pleasure far above all these and without which the brightest of the day would be imperfect. Half a dozen of our best singers were brought together, and one of our dear old hymns swelled sweetly forth upon the balmy air of eventide. A hundred voices followed in full chorus until the woods resounded like great cathedral arches. I seemed to hear the grand fugue of Isaiah rising in sublime unison: "Break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein." In a pleasant little speech from a wagon, Weston talked to us of the goodness of Him who paints the flower's every petal and attunes the children's every joy. All these he spoke of as so many voices calling toward a holy life and then to a clime more beautiful than the rarest that blooms about us here. I think that our minds were not unwilling to listen to such thoughts as these. In the hushed silence my own soul led in thanksgiving to God for His many kindnesses, and in prayer for rich spiritual blessings upon old and young. Then with many farewells and with happy faces still, we scattered away.

Only one interruption had occurred during the day to the general enjoyment. There is a rocky valley, rugged and picturesque, beginning abruptly on one side of our woods and zigzagging off to the North. I have already spoken of it as The Gorge. On both sides the ledges are rough and broken, forming recesses and caves dark with overhanging cedar and vine. A living stream winds through the valley, fed by springs and rivulets from the many openings in the ledges. Now and then the sparkling rills came rippling down the rocks and form fit haunts for such vegetation as delights in moist limestone. Attracted by the graceful ferns, Rose Arton had pressed ahead of her companions on up this valley and had separated herself from her party farther than she was aware.

Intent upon her prize, she was unconscious of any one near until, on turning, she suddenly saw a rough fierce countenance at her side with eyes peering into hers. "Yes, yes, yes," he growled as her startled gaze confronted his. With a scream Rose fled up the Gorge. For a moment he seemed to follow; then retraced his steps, and then walked into one of the recesses which breaks off among the rocks. Her companions had heard her cry and, hurrying to meet her, came to the head of the valley just in time to see the rude stranger disappearing behind the jutting crag. Pale with fright she told her story, and soon a dozen young knights, led by her brother Willy and armed with stones

and clubs were searching the valley's sides. But in vain. This little incident formed an exciting episode among the more agreeable sensations of the day. The young girl was a favorite with us all, and I would have been sorry for the mysterious stranger to have fallen into the hands of her chivalric defenders. The ubiquitous Weston had been prompt to throw himself among the volunteers, but I doubt whether even he could have restrained the fiery Willy if they had found the man.

I thought of the young pastor as there for salutary restraint. The girlish imaginations in our company idealized him into a beleaguered maiden's manly champion.

CHAPTER VIII.

TOM GAINES.

The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked. — *Solomon.*

"HERE is my bare throat, Catherine May, and here is my dagger. Take it in your fair hand and cut the black life out of me. A thousand times over had I rather you would stab me to the heart than pursue me with your innocent looks and soft tones. If I believed in angels and cherubs and all that, I should think that you were one. But I hate angels, and I almost hate you, Catherine May. Your holy face drives me mad."

The speaker had been sitting by a spring of water, behind his rude hut; after a moment's silence, he rose and walked up and down the path which led away to the creek.

"Sometimes I wish I had the power to believe in goodness and mercy. Here she came after their woods-frolic the other day, and brought her load of cake and flowers to yonder wild-beast den of mine. What have I to do with such trash! I hate what they call the good things of life, and I

have no more to do with flowers. Didn't he used to laugh and hug me when I brought him the big chunks of gingerbread from the town? And didn't he first begin to crow when he saw the posies which we carried him from the fields? Ah, they think Tom Gaines never had a heart! These people's God came and killed my boy—the only beautiful thing He had ever given me. The preacher dared to say it was his God that did it; and now they expect me to like the Being who put out the light from my dwelling. The poor, good-for-nothing wife had gone before. My boy was all that I had."

Still he paced the gloomy way. How little we know of what is passing along the darker paths where grief and sorrow and sin tread their dreary rounds!

"That woman will craze me yet. I can stand anything and everything but her kindness. No matter how mean and devilish the miserable creatures may be, she never tires of trying to do us good. She thinks it no disgrace to talk to the vilest and lowest. I try to make her spurn me; she grows only the kinder. Were all Christians like her, and were it not for the ghost of my dead boy, and were I not Tom Gaines, she would almost make me believe in religion. Sometimes I fear I shall kill her. Had any body else maddened me as she does, I would have dispatched him long ago. And yet I would not dare. She is all left that is beautiful on earth. Were she gone, it would be hell."

The hardened man looked indeed like one heart-stricken and hopeless and reckless.

"They think her happy," he said. "They see her cheerful and smiling and always bearing consolation to others; and they see no shadow across her life. They think it just natural and easy-like for her to look calm and peaceful by their sick and their dead; and I despise them for the matter-of-course way in which they receive her favors. Tom Gaines knows what it all costs. If you could persuade me, Catherine May, that you are truly happy, I would begin to believe in Christianity, and that your Savior has the power to still a storm. It puzzles me that you are not as wild and wicked as Tom Gaines. Poor fools, they think it just born in you and spontaneous!"

And he laughed a bitter laugh.

"You can't deceive this vile reprobate, my girl," he continued. "I know your wound; and, poor child, you'll carry it forever. It came upon you early, and what kept you up, I cannot tell. It was a dark, grim day for your young life. I wish that you had died. It would have been a beautiful thing, a lovely thing—the nice, solemn burial of young girlhood, all sweet and touching; and somebody would have made a little poetry on her, and everything would have passed off pleasant and heavenly. Then you would not have kept coming across my way like a scourge from the stars. For others, I don't care; but your innocence and kindness I can't endure. There's Lardner—he thinks

himself wondrous wise. The neighborhood has spoiled him. Every church must have its Pope. They consult him about everything. They think he can see through a mill-stone. I know he suspects and watches me. He has tried to get intimate—offering big wages to have me work for him. I knew he didn't like me, and why did he want me about him unless he had some smart purpose in view! No, no, Lardner; Tom is too old a bird to be caught with chaff. I dread the sweet eyes of Catherine May far more than all your smartness. I care not to strike *you*, Lardner. That wayward boy of yours will do that soon enough. With all your shrewdness, you have not been shrewd enough to raise your child aright. I need not bother my mind with you. You are hurt worse in your boy than I was in mine; and I don't envy you. At the worst, I could kill you, my loving friend; but I can't raise my hand against her. That blessed face would paralyze the blow."

In his rapid strides back and forth in the dark, he had thrown himself against a large thorn-bush which grew by the side of the dim path. He did not wince. Standing stubbornly fixed, he leaned his heavy form doggedly against a hundred sharp points.

"Now, that feels natural," he said, "I have grown used to that. Every joy in all these homes is a thorn to me. I could not have endured that assemblage of gay hearts the other day for the world. She sought me out and tried to persuade

the villain to go. Before the day was done, I fear that my hands would have dripped with blood. What right have these people to be happy with their children and mine cold in the ground! They tell me that even old John Phales lost his senses and ran a race. His asceticism has been the only thing in all their church to please me; and now he lifts his brambles from the shoulders of the young and joyous and lays them on mine. Your Christianity seems to delight in miracles even yet. There are some who pretend to hope for a change in Tom Gaines. They want me to forget my boy. They talk of my becoming holy and happy. It makes me squirm to think of Anson and Catherine and the old preacher praying for me. Folks say that nobody's prayers are answered unless they have faith. Not one of them has any faith about me. They think me possessed of the devil. I have become the scape-goat of the community. There are some who had better take care. I have struck more than once, and I may strike again!"

He raised his clenched fist and flung it into the bush of thorns. As if unconscious of a bruise, he turned and walked away with his hand bleeding.

"They have those at their communion table just as bad as the wretched Gaines. If I were to tell all I know! but they will not believe me. With all my faults, that beautiful Jake Askins has done a thousand times more deviltry than I. May be I'm a murderer—who knows?—but that man has murdered friendships and reputations and the peace

of society until hanging is too good for him. He has tried to make me his tool and would have incited me to a hundred crimes. He is busy now. He has insinuated it was Tom Gaines who frightened Rose Arton in The Gorge, and he has sprung the talk that Catherine is engineering desperately to catch a husband. Both are slanders, but the latter the more infamous of the two. I know better. I know it will never be. Any man would be a fool not to love her, and would be a bigger fool if he did. Let Jake Askins beware how he tampers with the good name of that dear girl! I have done her harm enough. It would be more comfortable for me if she were dead, but while she lives nobody shall harm her any more. I dare not cut her down myself. And woe to the knave who would blight her peace any further. It were better for him that he had never been born!"

Against the imaginary foe of her whom he claimed to hate, the strange man showed a fierceness that was terrible.

"The old preacher likes me better than he ought. I wish he'd stop it. I wish he wouldn't speak to me as he does, and shake my mean hand. I pity the old man. His home is as desolate as the hut of Tom Gaines. His happiness don't trouble me now. His God has treated us both about alike."

And he laughed viciously.

"I wish I hadn't done it. Had there been no Jake Askins, there would have been no Tom

Gaines. These hands would have been clear of that. I can't understand it. The same thing that made me a fiend, made that old sufferer a saint. And here we stand to-day, a pair of noble survivors from the wreck of all we loved. Ha, ha, ha. How grandly we compare! The tempest blew different ways. The blast that struck him, snatched him loose from earth and lifted him toward heaven. The whirlwind which uprooted me, knocked me flat, covered me with mire, and turned me over toward hell. Sometimes I wonder what made the difference. His children were wrested from him, and he was only the better and holier. My boy was torn away, and I grew wild in crime. I thought we were even in those black days, but it is not wholly even yet. Poor old mourner, and still so happy and hopeful! Were I to see the serene old fellow going to the God who knows all about it, bowing before His face, talking about Tom Gaines and praying for the monster, I believe it would crush me dead."

The hours were wearing on into the night. He seemed to care nothing for their flight. Many were the times when the man had walked and raved until daylight scared him home.

"Ah, Catherine, Catherine, how you would shrink from my presence if you but knew it all. Though you never understood what it is to hate, you would learn it then. I see you then spurn the reptile whose fang you have felt. You will drive me to tell you some day. I will belch out the

horrid truth in your face, and force you to spare me the attentions which are keeping my conscience sore and troublesome. Had it not been for you, I could have had this conscience down long since. Over and over I thought it buried. Then that pure submissive face passes before me, and again my bosom kindles into fire. I get to despise the abominable devil within me. This dagger driven home by your sweet fingers, would be precious to me in comparison with the good you want to do me. Poor trustful girl, you little dream who slew your brightest earthly hope. If I think these thoughts much longer, my own stained hand will drive the dagger to my heart."

He raised his hand and looked at it. It was stained sure enough. The red drops were still oozing from the wounds the thorns had made.

"Ha, ha," he cried. "I thought so. That is as it should be. That is according to the eternal fitness of things. There is rare appropriateness about it. Tom Gaines is arrayed in his jewels. You ought to see them, Catherine May. These are my garnets and rubies. Blood, blood, indeed!"

The moon was flinging up her feathery soft beams in the east. The light came slowly and silently stealing upon the world's darkness. The man plunged his bloody hand into the folds of his garment, and went sullenly toward his hut. He paused by a little mound. Another would have avoided that thicket of briers and brambles. There

in the wild forest, secluded from the presence of his fellows, living or dead, he had buried his boy. In the densest of the woods, he hid him as far as possible from the haunts of men. The briers and the brambles had not come to the little grave by choice. Nor of their own seeking had the noxious weeds and poisonous vines found the resting place of the child. A father's hand had hunted them over hill and valley, through malarious swamps and amid tangled masses of dangerous foliage, and transplanted these shocking adornments of death to the spot where his faded treasure lay. It was the wild freak of a rebellious soul.

Perhaps, in his selfish misanthropy, he wanted to prepare a wound for any man or woman who would venture to trespass upon the place he had reserved for his own heart alone. In rank luxuriance the venomous vegetation wreathed itself all about the grave and reached for yards around. It tried to overcreep the well-worn path. It rose threateningly against every comer. In bold, sickening redundance, it started up here and there and grasped after the branches above. It was a repulsive scene for the rest of a child. Such weird forms does grief sometimes take in the bosom of man.

"Oh my boy, my boy," he mourned, "your vile old father is lonesome. Lonesome to-night. Lonesome all the long year. I can hardly stand the strain. Why did you die? Why didn't you stay and make me a better man? The only hours

of aspiration I ever knew, were while looking upon your face. I don't know how it was; but something used to buzz in this heart of mine and make it wish to be good and pure for your sake. After you brought to my poor cabin your little innocent ways, I got to thinking about heaven. All *that* flickered and went out when you died. You ought not to have gone away. You ought to have clung to me and held me back from sin. Yonder tiger's lair might have grown decent and respectable, if you had staid. Then again, it may be better as it is. Perhaps my past life might have clouded the youngster's way; perhaps I might still have gone on to disgrace you. It may be that the world would have dared to ill-treat you, and then somebody else would have had to bite the dust. They can not trample upon you now. The very grave will pierce and poison them. Sometimes I think I would be willing for Catherine to come and look upon your lonely bed. Perhaps you might then rest better down there. May be it wouldn't be so dark and gloomy like. With her standing by, may be the clods would not be so heavy and cold upon your little bones. But then my thistles must not tear her soft and beautiful feet. I have myself put enough poison into her blessed veins. Never mind, my boy. I'll come every night and scare the hooting owls and drive the toads away. And some of these days, I'll quit yonder old cabin for good, and come and lie down with you here and *stay*. And then the gallows, which has been hun-

gry so long, will be cheated out of one good healthy corpse. Ha, ha, ha!"

With his coarse chuckle awaking the sleeping birds, he stalked away and disappeared within his rude door.

Just then another form arose from near the path which Gaines had trod, and walked off through the woods.

CHAPTER IX.

WAYS AND MEANS.

Mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good.—*Proverbs xiv : 22.*

OUR young men often issue from the Theological Seminaries freighted with pet theories not fully digested and, in their crude form, hard to adjust to the realities of the pastoral work. There is an impatience of everything which does not fit precisely to the rigid rule. No church answers to the ideal; and the inexperienced laborer strikes in upon his venture with the hope of suddenly bending everybody and everything to the lecture and the thesis. As a reformer, the knight of the Curriculum harbors no distrust of his own wisdom and has no notion of letting any man despise his youth. He knows too much and too little. There is often an honest disgust because a score of his seniors decline to resign the accumulated knowledge of years to the superior penetration of this Don Quixote of the Presbytery. In his church his course is apt to be revolutionary. Forms and customs which have become sacred to the hearts

of the people, he would ruthlessly overturn and replace with unfamiliar projects. He does not pause to consider the stern rights of *established usage*, until some sharp Lardner or conservative Phales clips his wings.

It was not grevious for me to discover Weston's amiable assumption that I was considerably wiser than he. Perhaps in this I was not far unlike my gentlest reader. And perhaps his readiness to defer to my opinion made it easier for me to respect his. I was not disposed to take advantage of his deference to his senior. I had a quiet theory of my own that practical pastors, active in the work, could possibly train young preachers more successfully than they can be trained in our Theological Seminaries. Not that I would depreciate the latter. But there need be no haste into the high office. The Savior did not enter upon it till He was thirty years old. Might not all the wisdom of the schools be wisely supplemented by a year or two of contact with the concrete problems of the ministry under some working pastor?

I expected this young man to succeed me when I was gone. I did not wish to be an arbitrary authority over conscience or sentiment. It suited my plan better to evoke his own originality, draw the true man out, and afford wholesome food for thought and reason without forcing one arbitrary dictum upon him. To wound or dwarf his manhood, would have been an arrant wrong to the young prophet and a thing abhorrent to my soul.

I have known great injustice done a new pastor by some superannuated preacher who remained within his field. The young have rights as well as the old. Among these, a right to prayerful consideration and forbearance, a right to great charity when making mistakes, and a right to think his own way to the true and the good. We all blundered in our earlier fields. Though that unlovable presumption, of which I spoke a moment ago, may sometimes challenge reproof, too much harshness of rebuke may be cruel and noxious. Patience and prayer may bring even the clerical Young America to humility, smooth away the ungainly branches, and prune the crooked scion into symmetrical shape for the better and wiser years.

We spent many hours of pleasant conference together. The path across the fields from the Mays' became better worn than ever. Where Catherine had so often walked on her errands of good, the young man's footsteps were pressing almost daily. Weston was anxious for work—earnest, constant work. The spirit of the great commission was upon him and he was burning for large achievements for the Master. There was no feverishness, no rash precipitancy; but one could see that the energies within him could not brook stagnation. Through long years of preparation he had been looking wistfully forward to opportunities for delivering his message and winning trophies for Christ; and now the holiest vision of his life seemed to be growing real, and here was the

field and here was the battle. It would have been base to repress the young warrior's zeal and courage. All the better principles of his new nature were strung to ardent endeavor, and I saw him standing like a true brave, firm and deliberate and with eye upon his Heavenly Leader, eager for chivalrous onset on the lines of the great adversary. It was beautiful.

My growing infirmities had long been preventing the execution of plans of usefulness which I had contemplated in our church. When I think of my own inefficiency, it is gratifying to me and creditable to the people that there has been as much of life and activity among them as there has. As Paul boasted of his churches in other respects, I too will boast of the religious willingness of my flock to take the old preacher's suggestions and prosecute their enterprises without his help. Of course there have been many things which could not move forward as under an active minister. For the highest prosperity of our churches, it is the minister after all that must pervade every effort, be present invisibly or visibly in every undertaking, and be felt as a genial, inspiring power in all that is done. He is God's appointed leader. His place is in the van.

It is a truth of parallel import that every Christain should have a work to do and a heart for its performance. Weston longed to see the entire membership astir in the vineyard. A pastor's executive ability is better proved in marshalling all

his forces to active service than in any other way. We talked a great deal about our prayer-meetings. This was necessarily and always the first great interest. Labor would be morbid and worthless without prayer.

My colleague had secured an invitation from the young men to be with them in their Saturday evening worship, and was already lecturing to them upon appropriate topics; usually upon topics suggested by themselves. Mingling with them as one of their own number, familiarly and fully in sympathy, they soon forgot their embarrassment at his presence. He led them to discuss methods of usefulness and propose plans of their own. One of these plans was put promptly into execution. None but members of the church were attending their meetings. A roll was formed of the young men in the congregation who were not pious, and careful inquiry was made as to who of our little praying band was most interested in each one of these and had the greater influence over him. This one was assigned to such individual for special prayer, and to induce as best he could to attend these services. Thus each one of our number had an unbelieving soul for whom he felt a personal responsibility at the throne of grace and in his daily efforts for the Savior's glory. There was a far reaching philosophy in this. It is very difficult to pray earnestly or to labor earnestly for indefinite masses. It is the warm heart that sends up prevailing petitions and persuades to Christ, and the

heart warms under concentration. Soon new faces began to appear among the little Saturday audience. At first, timid and shy by the side of their religious companions, but as their number increased they began to feel more at home. I was glad to hear that Willie Arton was one of these.

We could safely leave the young ladies' prayer-meeting to Catherine. Her good sense and piety were a guarantee of good. Had it been proper for man's presence to obtrude upon the secluded worship of modest womanhood, we could almost have wished to sit down there under the sweet retiring leadership of our dear girl. But no—we stood apart nor dared to press in and destroy God's holy distinctions. We desired not the low, sweet tones of womanly prayer to tremble into silence nor to grow harsh and masculine under man's ruder presence. We wished the lovely circle rather to whisper to the blessed Jesus, both without a blush and without a shadow upon that modesty which was given to them as their chiefest earthly glory by Him whose mother was Mary. Weston had assisted Catherine in selecting biographies of saintly women, which, in connection with the Scriptures, were to be read aloud in their meetings. The lives of Isabella Graham, Susannah Wesley, Mary Fletcher, Madame Guion, Ann and Sarah Judson, and of other godly ones of their sex, would, under the blessing of God, be a sweet savor there of good taste and purity and true maidenly aspiration.

Once each month, after their devotions, they were to meet at the parsonage for a fatherly talk from their old pastor. They would not be unmindful there of the fragrant feminine memory of her who once presided over these rooms; and we could none of us be the worse for studying the true sphere of woman in the place where she adorned it so beautifully and so long. How well I remember her as she grew up among our flock—a born lady, moulding daily into rarer loveliness. Her gentle girlhood came to Jesus and into her pastor's heart the same week. She nevermore departed from one or the other. None that ever knew her could henceforth admire the unrefined. The same hand that welcomed her into the Church, afterward welcomed her to the parsonage. How the old man's thought vibrates to and fro from the past! I have been writing about this as if telling Weston of it now. The time was to come when I would tell him.

It was our earnest desire to give new impulse to our regular Wednesday meeting. It would seem that every child of God ought to be glad to pause in the midst of the cares of the week, and renew his hold on the ordinances. Many of our members seemed to feel no attraction there. All ministers have known that cloud. How could a new interest be elicited? We desired no violent change. We wanted no display of machinery. We agreed in disliking startling, irreverent measures. Even if such management had been to our own taste, old

John Phales, as regular in his attendance as Anson himself, would soon have been doing something more than praying. But, with prayer kept prominent as the one leading purpose, it would be wise to devise some variety in the service. At one time we would secure in the place of the formal lecture, two or three short addresses from the laymen. Then again, we would announce beforehand from the pulpit a certain religious topic upon which the members were requested to bring passages of Scripture of their own selection for its elucidation. This exercise we found to be interesting and instructive and a favorite with the people. As a change, we would occasionally devote an evening to some one of the beneficent causes of our Church at large, and read extracts from the periodicals bearing upon the subject. I never saw a failure in attention while reading choice letters from our devoted missionaries. By this course, the prayers were directed to different and definite themes, and the old stereotyped forms and expressions began to disappear.

One real trouble in this connection, met the young pastor. It had become so commonly recognized among us, that I had about surrendered hope and become resigned to the fact. Of those who seemed to have no part or lot in the prayer-meeting, was one of the good men of our Session. While two of the elders prized it as a privilege and a joy, Lardner had quietly fixed his habits otherwise. We grew not to expect him. If now and then he

came, we took it as an exception and a surprise. Christianity is logical and symmetrical, but its concrete forms are often strangely eccentric. One of these anomalies is certainly the turning away of an officer of the kingdom from the audience chamber of the Lord of Zion. We wonder for awhile, and after a time grow used to it. Lardner was an excellent counsellor. Our preacher began to value him as such, but the more he prized his friendship the more he lamented his absence from the place of prayer. What little heavens our churches would be if there were none that neglected duty! The waywardness of the Elder's oldest son added to Weston's distress at the constant absence of the father. Lardner was not a man to bear dictation or pressure, and Weston must look to prayer and to the future for a change.

A church is always somewhat crippled where there is not good singing. A full round swell of appropriate music gives life and tone and unction to all the other services of the sanctuary. It helps to wing the prayer and it helps the preacher to preach. The sermon rises and brightens and soars when it has on both sides of it sweet, melodious outbursts of harmonious praise. There had been an unfortunate tendency in our congregation to surrender this high privilege to a delegated few, and, as is often the case, even this delegated few were not doing it very well. I had noticed for some time a suspicious straining after effect, and with rather poor effect after all. These dangerous

proclivities in our choirs do not develop themselves full-fledged. The operatic poison insinuates itself stealthily. One by one the solemn tunes fade out, and one by one the more pretentious airs screech the dirges of the old. In the course of this unhealthy decline, it is difficult to find the precise point where medicine is to be administered. Singers are the most sensitive of all creatures that utter sound. We preachers had as well recognize the fact that our choirs, however skillfully and religiously trained, are adepts in producing discords. John Phales was ominously restless, but as yet had remained silent

Unfortunately the old preacher's only musical talent was that of appreciation. Like many of God's dumb worshipers, I had sung only by proxy. The good wife had done it all. The organs the Creator had given me stoutly refused to adapt themselves to the requirements of sweet hymn and psalm. It is the only serious reason I have had to doubt my call to the ministry. The preacher who cannot sing, ought to preach mighty well to compensate for the unmelodious throat. Many poor sermons by poor preachers have been redeemed by their good singing. Through long years I have yearned to wield the scepter of song. Well, I suppose we shall all of us sing up yonder. But the good wife has gone on before and is already practising and will be ahead of me still.

Weston's voice, too, was already attuned and cultured to heavenly strains. No choir would be

able to slight his knowledge of the divine art or hold his taste in contempt. Notwithstanding many busy hours, he found time to drop in upon the first meeting of the choir and take pleasant interest in their music. Unobtrusive and without dictation, his gifts and his love of the science grew upon them until they missed him when away. After awhile, by their invitation, he delivered from the Bible standpoint a lecture upon the service of song. Due notice had been given, and young and old were there. The lecture itself was poetry and music, and chanted itself in chords of holy memories and high aspirations to the hearts of all that heard.

A skillful advocate of all that is best in the old or the new, we seemed to listen to the harp and healthy tones of the ruddy shepherd of Israel; then to that elevated duet which rang out upon the midnight air at Philippi; then to the strong notes of Martin Luther while he sang as well as prayed the great Reformation into breadth and power; then to the notes of Watts and the Wesleys while they heralded in sweet strains the return of Jesus to the Church which had again become a den of thieves; and then to the well-tuned lyre of William Bradbury while once more, in the name of the Master vindicating the hosannas of the children in our temples. He would have all ages singing, from the faltering voice of decrepitude to the first lispings of infancy. None could impeach his estimate of music's best effect, for of the science he knew

more than we all. God bless my boy! In a little while, now one and now another of the venerable tried tunes of the centuries were finding their way back into our worship. A healthier taste was beginning to feel that there was more of power and beauty in many of these than in the lighter compositions of irreligious and worldly days.

Meanwhile I knew that Weston was quietly seeking out among our young people voices capable of improvement, and was gradually introducing them to the meetings of the choir. Imperceptibly the number grew until we began to feel that the whole congregation was singing. The sweetness and the richness and the glory were dawning back upon this ordinance of God. His big, well-worn book was again in the hands of Phales, and the tones which had been growing harsh and gutteral for vigorous protest, were now raised in concert in praise of the Lamb. One Sunday, we heard him catch the solemn rhythm and join in an air which none of us had ever heard before. The true spirit of devotion, however, was in the tune. No matter then whether ancient or modern. Old Hundred and Coronation and Golden Hill were once new.

We had frequent conferences of our entire Session about the Sabbath-school; but this great interest must be deferred to another chapter.

The public know little of the latent history of such achievements. I try to compress our plans into a few pages, but they extended over months and came to pass without violence. To consum-

mate them required a great deal of visiting and of generalship on the part of the young pastor. Many movements in the kingdom, unobserved by the world and unappreciated by the children of the kingdom themselves, have cost hours of thought, anxiety, supplication, and arduous endeavor on the part of somebody.

Among the great of earth and blessed of heaven is one of fair features and graceful form, whom the busy speech of men calls by a title unpoetical, monosyllabic, and yet greatly honored. She takes her place in the vineyard by the side of Knowledge and Faith and Godly Zeal, and is the twin sister of Wisdom. Were I to build a monument of honor to the past and of good to the future, I would construct it of the finest marble; I would round it up into the most beautiful proportions; I would leave upon it no harsh angle, no false perspective; I would have its high apex catch the first rays of the rising sun; and I would inscribe upon it in enduring memorial the homely, unpretentious name of sanctified religious TACT.

CHAPTER X.

THE MAN OF PRAYER AND HIS CHARGE.

Thou wilt prepare their heart; Thou wilt cause Thine ear to hear.
—*The Sweet Singer of Israel.*

IN the days of the good wife, it had been our custom to entertain at the parsonage some one of the families of the parish every week. Without regular order and without public proclamation of our rule, we would quietly invite an entire household for a day of pleasant companionship. After the faithful help-meet had gone to her reward and my own strength grew uncertain, the custom so grateful to my heart became more irregular; but Mother Howe still insisted upon its observance as far as we were able. Good soul, she knows the weaning from the ties of the past must go on, but her kind thoughtfulness always manages that the links shall be severed as slowly and tenderly as possible.

"Given to hospitality—Romans twelfth and thirteenth; Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it and make cakes upon the hearth

—Genesis eighteenth and sixth; In that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister—Hebrews sixth and tenth."

With the Scriptures in her lips and with her untiring consideration for the yearnings of her pastor's bosom to his people and to the fading joys of the past, of course she had her way. God has been very good in smoothing these last years. It is touching to see how all ages delight to contribute to the old man's happiness. God bless the people!

The day with the Ansons was always awaited with special anticipations of pleasure. There are some Christians who seem to carry an atmosphere of sanctity about them wherever they go. Without a word, without human credentials, you feel that you are in the presence of the children of light. Resting upon them like the halo of the old painters, is the unmistakable impress of eminent piety. The incense of the altar fires is still in their garments and in their locks. To a mysterious inner sense, their faces shine almost as the face of Moses—only that they calm and elevate instead of dazzling, and they wear no veil. To the blind alone has the beauty of holiness ever been counterfeited. When the soul makes its constant home upon the mountain of myrrh and hill of frankincense, it brings a smell of their balms down with it to those of us in the plain below.

This aroma of the higher spirituality floated into our doors and distilled through the rooms, as we shook hands with the praying elder and his pray-

ing wife. For some wise reason, God had left the hearth and heart of these servants of His unlighted by children's smiles. It is one of the secrets of His deep workings that here and there about our earth we find bosoms which would have loved most warmly and wisely, and yet have never been permitted to thrill under the pillowed head of a little trusting babe. The flowers seem to do their best to compensate for the great vacancy, and in quiet sympathy to bloom more sweetly there than where there are more eyes to prize them. The canaries sing day and night in their cages and would strive to fill the silence that is unfilled by human birdlings. The favored dog with his happy head upon his master's lap, and the little kittens which never cry in vain, can tell a story of kindness all full of pathos and unstinted praise. The old hen's progeny and the prattling golden goslings would exchange their darling mistress for none other in the world. There is a paternal and a maternal gentleness toward everything that needs a care. All the children in the neighborhood know well who will spoil them most. The pocket had unfathomed depths from which Aunt Lydia Anson distributed an apple or a heart-shaped cake to every little smiling boy or girl she met at church.

And so it continued, until one day the Elder offered a prayer for guidance and went off to the city Asylum and returned with Rose and Willy Arton. When on the next Sabbath our friends

came into church with their adopted treasures and amid the breath of morning, the plain faces of the new parents seemed to us almost as sweet and innocent as the faces of the children. Nothing was known of the parentage of the twins. When very young, they had come under the care of the Institution with only an irresponsible assurance from the one that brought them, that they were of good blood, accompanied with the request that they might be supplied with proper homes when older. And now there were some who feared for Anson's experiment and talked of the risk of adopting unknown children, the danger of hereditary taint, the sorrow that might be in store for those who would learn to love. But when we saw the young waifs brought so regularly into our prayer-meetings and the Sunday-school and the sanctuary, there were others of us who believed there must have been a praying father or a praying mother back somewhere in their past, and that God was fulfilling His covenant in casting their lines in such pleasant places. The religious home left vacant of offspring, the bosoms which warmed for all that had a need, the wholesome influences there for such as God might send; and then in good time the floating of two immortal destinies from the dim and dark into this haven of comfort and kindness and purity; all this looked too much like the handiwork of the Divine Arranger for those of us to dread, who had watched reverently for fifty years and seen no loose chance governing the

affairs of men. On two hearts at least, lowered no shadow of solicitude. They had prayed; they had no doubt it would be well. They received the young souls as a gift from God to their waiting loves, and a charge to be trained for His glory. And so these fortunate ones came in from the outer vague uncertainties, and built their nest among the petted singing birds and the delighted little kittens.

In time we all became glad in the quiet gladness of the Ansons. The children grew in beauty and in favor with the parish. All were attracted to them for the Ansons' sakes as well as for their own. It was very touching to notice the fatherly and motherly ways of the Elder and his wife. I opine there were no prouder or more devoted parents in all the country around. Childhood has never had to stand waiting an entrance to my heart; but seldom has its response been more prompt and more tender than to these bright twins. Their open faces threw new starlight at me whenever they passed me by. Perhaps it was their orphanhood that appealed so affectingly to my heart; and God's evident care for that orphanhood. Somehow, as the girl grew, she reminded me very preciously and more and more of her whose love had formed the joy of life and whom I shall see soon beyond the billows. But the old man often dreams, and all innocent girlhood is very sweet to him. Rose was now at her sixteenth year, and its opening bloom was very beautiful. Willy was no

less prepossessing as a boy—a stirring, impulsive, frolicsome, busy boy—one who might be a man of noble deeds or one whose life might be potent for evil. You saw such energies germinant within as would never admit of a commonplace future. The dashing, impetuous marshalling of the defenders of his sister that day in The Gorge, was one of a hundred marked incidents giving index to his character.

We observed but one exception in the general favor to the children. From the first their presence seemed to inspire him with dislike. His tongue appeared incapable of one good word for the orphans. Exaggerated rumors were often set afloat of their foibles—rumors that could easily be traced to the one source. Some of us surmised that this restless enmity took its rise in a distant unrecognized kinship to the Ansons, which might have had its eye upon the heirship to their property. But it was hardly worth while to reason about the gossip of our unfortunate brother. Jake Askins was simply—Jake Askins.

The children had early learned to come to the parsonage. On their holidays they claimed no greater pleasure than to hurry over and help me in my garden. The crippled son of my housekeeper was one of our home attractions. The poor boy employed many of his retired hours with his knife, carving curious keepsakes which were very much prized by our young people. There was always something new and pretty for Rose and

Willy. In return, Willy would bring some gift from Aunt Lydia, or a rabbit from his traps ; and Rose, as she learned to sew, some warm product of her needle. The children's friendship was delightful to look upon.

" Thou art a helper of the fatherless—Psalm ten and fourteenth ; I have been young and now I am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread—Psalm thirty-seven and twenty-fifth," quoted mother Howe. Parallel passages never failed her when these children came. Whether her mind was more upon her own fatherless boy, or whether, like us, she was thinking of the covenant promises of God as entailed by some praying ancestor upon our two city waifs, we did not know.

With the cripple, whose chair Weston and Willy had wheeled in, there were eight of us in our little parlor. It was always the custom of these occasions that most of the cooking be done the day before, so that the ladies might be as free as possible to enjoy with us the social pleasure. Aunt Lydia and Mother Howe, genial souls, gravitated together into the corner where the mistress used to sit, and there they plied their busy needles in the good old-fashioned way. There are some of us yet lingering to whom few pictures are more sweet than that of the skilled motions of loving fingers around the remembered fireside ; where, while the stockings lengthened, the conversation kept pace in unison, word by word, and stitch by

stitch, and widened and narrowed, and narrowed and widened, through all the livelong day. In this way our mothers and grandmothers knit many sound webs of friendship, soft-colored, long and strong. The visiting card and fifteen minutes call came in upon the nobler, honester knitting needle's fading glory.

"I believe," said Anson, "that we are on the eve of precious scenes in the church. There may come clouds and disappointments first, to try our weak faith ; but the Lord is beginning to seem very near, and I think we may put ourselves in readiness for His blessing."

Rose and her brother and Johnny Howe and Weston had been talking together, but they all noticed Anson's remark. Rose looked up quickly. I saw Weston look as quickly at her.

"According to your faith be it unto you—Matthew nine and twenty-ninth," responded the ready housekeeper.

"Many," continued the Elder, "seem to be awaiting the stirring of the waters. Our congregations are deeply attentive, but the proportion of the unregenerate has been growing upon us until their number is very large. They have been well indoctrinated ; they know enough for the salvation of their souls ; but there they stay and make no sign. All the means of grace are in our hands. There must come the impulse from above or the end will be dark. I want to expect the impulse."

The young people were silently listening.

"Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you," suggested the young pastor.

Mother Howe's needles clicked emphasis to every word. "Acts first and eighth," she answered. I think Weston had anticipated her in the quotation.

"How long," I asked, "have you been thinking of a revival? What led you to expect this, instead of a quiet steady work of grace, as heretofore?"

"It came upon me," he said, "while upon my knees. I was pleading for special cases, one after another, until the number so increased upon me that I was forced to take our entire community up to the Throne. There were so many of the unconverted pressing upon my soul that I felt it must crush me, and yet my soul climbed on up under the weight. I hardly dared to leave out *anybody*."

"If ye shall ask *anything* in My name, I will do it—John fourteen and fourteenth," promptly replied Mother Howe.

Anson was undoubtedly intensely interested. It was not often he led in conversation.

"It would be sad," he said, "for death to invade our pews. Who knows where he would first strike? We cannot expect these thick ranks of unbelievers to be spared much longer."

Indications of feeling welled up from the depth of Aunt Lydia's eyes. Her heart was one with the Elder's. Rose looked frequently from one to

the other. There was another quick glance which scarcely missed a single glance of hers.

Weston asked, "Have you ever had what you felt assured were divine intimations of future events? Do you think that God, in this way, sometimes conveys a suggestion of His purposes?"

"I only know," he answered, "that I have confidently believed He would grant my request, entertained no doubt, rejoiced in the certainty; and after awhile, it all came about. I expected, and was not disappointed."

"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him—Psalm twenty-five and fourteen," came from among the lengthening stockings.

Anson was certainly in a talking mood.

"Once," he said, "I was in a room with a very dear friend. For some weeks this friend had been distressed for sin and had found no peace. Late into the night, side by side, I had been trying to portray the way of life and to point that way. There seemed to come no light. I had loved my friend very dearly from childhood, and surely this twin soul would understand me—me of all others. And yet it was not so. The conversation dropped. I thought my friend asleep. And then I prayed as never before I had prayed for any soul but my own. I had firm hold upon the horns of the altar. All at once I felt that the one for whom I plead could never be lost. The fact that God would save blazed upon me like a certainty, and my heart was knit to the heart of my companion as

never before. I knew God heard me. That prayer was the prayer of faith. In that joy I sunk contentedly to sleep. When the morning stirred us both from slumber, I was just at the point of telling of my prayer, when my friend anticipated me by telling of the glorious vanishing of all fear, and the sure hope of forgiveness. Not asleep as I had supposed, but thinking I slept, and like myself in earnest prayer, the very moments when I believed salvation sure, my companion had passed from death unto life. When I received it as real, at that instant it became real. Faith was knowledge."

Again, from among the busy needles, came the voice of God—"And it shall come to pass that before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear—Isaiah sixty-five and twenty-fourth."

By the side of Mother Howe was another, who showed subdued emotion under every word. None doubted who it was that had been lifted into the arms of Jesus by the prevailing petitions of the righteous man. Nor did we marvel that the two had kept on praying ever since. And so it is: Under God, the prayers of believing husbands have saved many wives; the prayers of believing wives have saved many husbands. It must be a tender tie henceforth which binds the two together—and to the Throne.

A similar thought seemed to be in the mind of Weston. "I suppose," he said, "that constant

communion with God doubles every human affection, and makes earthly homes Edens."

The text was ready in the corner. "Rejoice evermore; pray without ceasing—First Thessalonians, five, sixteenth and seventeenth."

"Yes," said he, "there seems to be in the thought of the Apostle direct connection between the two injunctions. In order to constant rejoicing, there must be continuance in prayer. When praying ceases, the happiness of the heart goes out."

Rose was watching every word.

"I have wondered," said the cripple, "how that last command can be kept. Even lame Johnny, with nothing else to do, cannot be in prayer all the time. I don't know how it can be obeyed by the active and energetic and busy."

I suggested the usual interpretation. It did not mean incessant praying, the attitude or the words; but that its proper place in our lives and in our religion should be maintained. That the Christian must never abandon a habit of prayer.

"But," said Anson, "can we not carry the spirit of prayer into everything, and all the time? May not the Apostle mean a constant habitude of soul? I don't know why the whole life of a Christian may not be a prayer. Our secular pursuits may constantly be sanctified with the thought of God and of duty. It seems to me that the store, the workshop, the farm, and the office, may be kept very close alongside the Mercy-seat. Every

bargain and sale may be made as in the presence of Jesus. An hourly expectancy of His smiles upon us and our labors and our companionships, is as truly the attitude of prayer as when upon our knees. And thus shall we virtually pray without ceasing."

Such, undoubtedly, was the good man's own life.

CHAPTER XI.

CHILDREN OF A PRINCESS?

Death and life are in the power of the tongue.—*Proverbs xviii : 21.*

MOTHER Howe and Aunt Lydia went out of the room. Rose soon followed. Womanly thoughtfulness for the comfort of our sex was already astir within the young lassie's bosom and carried her out with the older women. It is surprising how early the intuitions of loving service begin to impel heart and hand of even infant girlhood. Dinner was announced ere long, and a genial cluster of faces surrounded the old man's table as in the olden days. In the chairs where the twins were sitting, our Mary and our own Willie used to sit before the dark years lowered.

Dinner was at the good hour of twelve. I have never been able to sacrifice my mid-day meal to the fashionable hours. And all my people like myself had moved healthily on in that groove too long. It best divides our day and all our country cares. We love the long, unbroken afternoons, when the sun seems to linger patiently for the fin-

ishing of the appointed task or for the full flow of friendship in the society of neighbors.

The young people had seemed interested in the religious conversation of their elders through the morning. I would not exact their attention too far. After dinner I told the boy to take my gun and be off to the woods for a squirrel or partridge for our Johnny. In the hunt Willy would enjoy the best dessert to his dinner. His face lightened as he dashed away. I sent Rose and Weston and the invalid to the library for a search among my books. They would find something there to suit them all. The youthful had not all gone out of the old preacher's study.

Among the venerable tomes of the fathers, and of the schoolmen, and of the ponderous Puritan divines of England, are shelves now and then relieved with the better belles-lettres thought of modern times. So it be pure and thoughtful, we lose nothing by mingling the tasteful and sparkling with the deeper theologic lore. You cannot hope to touch the chords of true sentiment in others, unless you keep your sympathies and your culture in unison with those chords. Our preachers would retain their hold far longer on the mind of the young, if, while growing old, they would keep their own taste fresh and green and fragrant in the higher forms of current literature.

I saw Mother Howe and Aunt Lydia out among the chickens and turkeys. The housekeeper was exhibiting the results of her skill in the poultry

management, and the two were comparing views as to the proper food and the prevention of disease. Clergymen are not supposed to be disinterested spectators of the successful prosecution of this great interest. Such talks between farmers' wives, have always seemed to me among the most innocent in the world, nor wholly devoid of poetry. They are very beautiful and wholesome and refreshing, in comparison with earth's hot-beds of scandal. "How often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings—Luke thirteen and thirty-fourth;" I heard a well-known voice say while we were passing the good couple by. Her flow of Scripture thought came as unaffectedly from the lips of the Mother, as the natural chirp from the throats of the happy chickens.

Thus our company distributed itself according to its pleasure. Anson and I started for the pasture, where I wished to consult him about my blooded sheep. Passing the library door, I saw there was no cloud there. Johnny had been wheeled to the bay-window, and was absorbed in his book. It was the delight of his retired life. Here was one of the many wise compensations in the Divine Providence. In debarring him from outdoor pleasures, God had endowed him with a passion for books. He never wearied of their companionship. Rose was seated by my study table with a volume before her, while Weston was bending over, making some explanation upon the open

page. She was looking earnestly up into his face. Again was stamped upon my memory a companion picture to the one, still fresh, of the coronation in the woods.

The elder and I grew tired in our ramble, and found a shady resting-place among the farther trees. There we talked together, as often before, of the spiritual interests of our flock. I discovered more and more that his heart was set upon some new manifestation of God's favor toward our church. He had been enjoying the young preacher's ministrations most richly, and was ardent in delight over the evidences of his devoted piety. I do not think that a hypocrite could deceive the religious instincts of Allen Anson very long. I found that his soul was deeply stirred for his adopted children. He longed for their salvation as for hidden treasures.

"Old enough, old enough," he said. "Old enough to die, and old enough to love the Savior. I cannot bear for them to grow up and go on indurating in sin. I know the children well, and I know that the religion of Jesus would be very sweet to their young bosoms."

I cannot tell how long our conversation lasted, but while he was yet speaking, we heard angry voices. Anson first noticed that it was the voice of his Willy. It grew bitterly threatening, and the Elder rose in affright. We stepped briskly towards the place whence the sounds seemed to proceed, but before we had gone far, the boy was seen hur-

rying toward the house. He heard Anson's call, turned immediately, and met us. The boy was fearfully excited.

"If that man ever speaks to me again, I will shoot him," he cried. "I would not have cared for myself. But I dare him ever to talk that way again of sister. I wish I had killed him!"

"Oh no, my son," plead the Elder. "You know not what you say. Come, sit here, my child, and calm yourself, and tell your father all about it."

"Would to God you were my father!" answered the boy sadly. "I have been expecting insults first or last. I knew that enemies would not hesitate some day to throw at us our unknown parentage. Your kindness could not save us from that. But that base man has gone too far. And he is a member of your church!"—he added, turning suddenly to me.

"There, Willy; you *must* control yourself, and let us know who has injured you and how. Here are two whom you know to be friends, and we are waiting to sympathize with your trouble."

Anson's face and tones ought to have stilled the tempest. He got the wrathful boy seated between us, and we learned his grievance. While hunting, he had met Jake Askins. I suppose that Askins had been hunting him. Without provocation the boy had been taunted with wasting his time in idleness and living upon charity. The high-spirited lad owned to us that he answered bitterly,

Then his tormentor told him that his pride would be brought low; that it was already understood in the neighborhood that he and his sister had been taken into the Asylum from one of the lowest city brothels; and that at any time they were liable to be claimed by their ignoble parents.

"And at that," almost groaned the poor child, "I raised my gun to fire, when with a mocking jeer the coward leaped down the bank and fled. But I'll never forget it. The time of settlement will come. He lies! I *know* he lies! I care nothing for myself. I know that my sister comes of no tainted blood. And I'll defend her through the world."

Ah! Askins, Askins, what pleasure could you find in planting a needless thorn in this young life! Why should man delight to say the word which may bleed a heart forever? I saw at that hour a storm had been raised which might wreck the boy. Nothing but the grace of God could keep him as innocent and happy as before the wrong-doer spoke. My heart drew to the child very tenderly.

"And he is one of your Christians," continued the lad, returning to a former thought. "And I suppose the church is already full of the lie!"

There was the danger. The boy's conclusions were terribly rapid. And here his young heart was dashing against the very means to which I looked for the healing of the wound. If he should finally grow embittered against God's covenant ordinances, what hope was there for the boy?

We calmed and consoled him the best we could, but we saw that his high spirit still chafed. Then Anson took him to Rose. There need to be no secrets up at the house. Willy's change in manner would require explanation, and Anson knew nothing but candor. He preferred that Rose should know all at once, rather than she should learn of it by hints and after many anxieties. I think he had great confidence in the girl. So Willy again told his story. At first her face blanched and her lip quivered; then the brave little woman grew calm—calmer than any of us. She went to her brother and put her arm caressingly around him.

"There is too much love," she said, "here all about us for any real harm to come to you or me. We will not care, darling Willy. We will love each other, and love all that love us; and then there will be no room for hate. If we live loving lives, nobody will care about the silly past. And some bright morning we will awake and find it coming out that we are the children of a Princess!"

The girl was wise beyond her years. I saw it had cost her a struggle. She had put her brave little foot down upon her own resentment for his sake. And he smiled in her arms. Often in the vernal hours of maidenhood, dawns like blushing daylight that strange ethereal power which places her far in advance of the boy and gives promise of holy influences in the years to come. She never looked at Weston or the rest of us. I found

myself watching him, and I noticed something in his face which I had never seen before. It was not to be understood till many more events had happened.

The evening began to settle toward us and our guests were ready to go. The Bible was opened and read. And where we had talked of the privilege of prayer in the morning, there we knelt in our time of solicitude and committed to our Heavenly Friend all that we had done and said and heard and felt during the day. In bidding our Rose good-bye, I noticed among her borrowed books, Baxter's Call to the Unconverted. I think that my young colleague knew of it too.

CHAPTER XII.

NANCY SMITH IS TROUBLED.

I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me.—*Nebuchadnezzar.*

SICKNESS at the Valeys'. There always *was* sickness at the Valeys'. Miss Nancy's anxious heart feared that they would not be taken care of. The church was so negligent about its sick. Then it came to her knowledge that the young pastor and Catherine were there in turn or together every night. Where two such watchers were, there certainly could be no want. Wherever disease or poverty was known in the parish, there these two were also found. Living in the same house, they learned from each other of every case of need, and Weston knew that at any time he could call upon her for help. It was a pleasant thing for the minister. If they did not go together upon their errands of mercy, they were certain to meet first or last wherever good was to be done. With two such good Samaritans by the bedside, there was no danger of neglect of the Valeys.

Still Nancy Smith was troubled. The pastor was doing too much. His health would never bear the constant strain and exposure. It had broken the old pastor down. Young Phales and young Sheldon and young May ought to take such burdens off the preacher's shoulders. Miss Hope learned that these very young men, together with others, were very attentive to the suffering family and had been insisting upon taking their minister's place. Nor could the most careful inspection discover any symptoms of failing strength in Weston. On the contrary, our pure prairie breezes were giving to cheek and muscle surer tokens of health and vigor than when he first came among us.

But Nancy Smith was troubled. The people were talking in a way that would certainly result in driving Weston from his field. His name had begun to be associated with Catherine's so generally that it must be very embarrassing to him. Miss Nancy passed with him through all the tortures of this embarrassment. It must be very painful indeed for him to be seen with her so much. The strange thing about it was, that none of us could discover any embarrassment on the part of Weston himself. I suppose he knew that our match-makers had soon predestined the dear girl for his future wife; but, if so, he seemed utterly unconscious of it. Now and then some ventured to hint to him of the matter, but he never appeared to apprehend, and very few cared to do so a second time. The discharge of his duties went on as if upon a plane above the gossip.

This is a difficult feat for the unmarried ministry; but, when they can attain to the dignity of it, it is a safeguard to their influence of inestimable value. I have seen the preacher demeaned very rapidly by allowing himself to joke or be joked about his matrimonial hopes. The young man had better beware of those who would tempt him into confidences or even into playful banter. These very ones will respect him more if he declines to be belittled. There are certain points of clerical dignity which we cannot afford to compromise; and this is one of them. Weston was in no danger. Notwithstanding his pleasant ingenuousness of manner, he gave no challenge for undue familiarity. It was wholesomely felt that he had no desire to discuss publicly the question of marriage. If he ever thought of the holy bonds at all, it was locked up as a sacred thing within his own bosom. If the people's surmises disturbed him, he certainly made no sign. And yet Nancy Smith was troubled.

She feared that the Sheldons would consider their pastor cheapened by having his name connected with a lady in such moderate circumstances. Their church-pride would be offended. Besides, they had daughters of their own. And there were other marriageable young women in the congregation. It was very natural that more than one would have their eye upon a popular young minister. Miss Nancy had heard that it was ruinous for a pastor to choose a wife among his own flock. No matter that her sister suggested the happy

selection by the senior from among his choice lambs. No matter for the amiable plea that Catherine, of all others, was fitted for a clergyman's wife. She was pure and peaceable; active in every good work; courteous and affable; unselfish and gentle; and beloved by all. What more could be desired? No one in all the world could find an objection to Catherine May. A minister could not do a wiser or happier thing than wed such a life to his. So thought the cheerful Hope, and so thought more than Hope. Still Miss Nancy could not yield the theory that no fitness and no love could justify so near an alliance of a pastor with his church.

She insisted, too, that it was hard on Catherine. It was bad that any young lady's name should be so much in the mouths of the people. Already had some mischief-maker attempted to set afloat the scandal that she was doing all in her power to entrap the preacher. Somebody would have it appear that this was the meaning of her zeal in all good work. True, the slander could not live. Her modesty was too well approved; and old and young had in their own persons too many evidences of her godly beneficence before we ever heard of Weston. Then, Miss Nancy feared there would gradually grow up an alienation between Catherine and the pastor, and that she would be chilled by the gossip and weaned from her work. The dear girl went on the even tenor of her way just as before. She seemed at an elevation as far above the

disturbing elements as Weston himself. A daughter to the old pastor, a sister to the new, and that was all. If the tenderness of her true heart tended toward any being but her Savior, those of us who knew her best were unable to discover it.

The interest of the people in their minister's marriage must not be blamed. It is known that preacher's *will* marry. Their call to wedded life is almost as divinely endorsed as their call to the sacred office. At least, the most of them feel that way. First or last, they think of the sister they are entitled to lead about. And it is well. A proper wife doubles the capacity for usefulness. A young pastor may be popular and for a while successful. There may be a certain transient influence apparently greater than that of the married. In course of time—two or three or four years—there comes a pause and often a dead-lock in his power for good. His congregations may still be large and respectful, but there is no more true growth. He feels the stoppage and knows not what it means. It means that he has reached the limit of his influence in his parish as an unmarried man. Celibacy has touched the acme of its efficiency in God's vineyard.

Deeply interested in all that concerned Weston, I knew that, for the full development of his ministerial strength, the day would come when he must marry. And I own that, with others, the old preacher had found himself dreaming of his colleague and Catherine. Happy the man that would win her

heart! Yet, somehow I doubted if it would ever be. Then again, for Weston's sake, I put the doubt aside. Only one other had come so near my ideal of a minister's wife. So I could not blame the people for their thoughts and surmises. I had been building castles too. We preachers would often censure our people for what we do ourselves. In my prayers I had often joined this manly man and womanly woman together. Now and then there came a former memory, azure and golden from the past, to forbid the bans. Again I would put it reverently by, and seem to see these two well-mated in a common work when I am gone. Meanwhile, Miss Nancy, I will carry no cloud like yours, but leave it all to their own hearts and to God.

Miss Nancy had another trouble. Willy Arton had lost his interest in the Sunday-school and appeared restless and unhappy in church. When excuse could be found, he was absent. His face had grown defiant. Others besides Nancy were ready to fear for the experiment of Allen and Lydia. A report had gained currency of his violent temper and of his threatening the life of one of our members. The poor fellow's surly, morose looks gave color to the rumor. Along with this spread another story of degraded birth. The twins were now coming to an age when they would enter society, and there were many families among us who could not forget their own pure descent, and who would find it difficult, even for Anson's sake, to divest themselves of a sensitiveness about

the association of their children. However poorly vouched for, such rumors, once started, will have their influence. Some of us understood it all; but the best defence and the clearest explanations cannot clean out all the poison from the trail of a slander.

Many of the best hearts seemed only the warmer and the more attentive to the orphans. Rose looked anxious and uncomfortable, but rather I think on her brother's account than on her own. Catherine was with her more than ever. On her rides about the neighborhood, she would call by for the orphan girl. They often took their evening walks arm in arm. Catherine adroitly contrived that she should be included with herself in her social friendships. Society could not long think of slighting any chosen associate of its favorite Catherine. Her goodness interposed as a shield to turn the shafts of the mischief-maker aside. This true woman seemed to be enveloping her in the broad folds of her own pure affections secure from all harm.

Willy's pride was only the more in insurrection because of the new kindness to him and his sister. Everything which his sensitive nature could construe into the semblance of patronage, he repelled. We may censure the lad, but perhaps we all would have felt the same way. It grieved Catherine greatly to see him shrinking from her. She had always liked the boy, and had been his apologist whenever his impulsiveness incurred disapproval.

Often she had talked with me about him, his present and his future, and plead for special interest in his behalf. His name had long seemed to fall from her lips in very tender music to my ear. But there was a reason for this of which I need not tell. Willy became sadly unreasonable. He appeared to fret under his sister's intimacy with Catherine. Sweet, genial, cordial as the good woman's attentions were, he distorted them into condescending pity and compassionate championship. The wronged spirit wanted, not sympathy, but justice upon the injurer.

During these trials, Rose was frequently at the Mays'. The family treated her as kindly as if she were Catherine's youngest sister and made her feel as much at home as at Anson's own house. One evening an event occurred which again puzzled the very few that ever heard of it. Willy had been in the habit of calling for his sister whenever she remained with any of the neighbors till after night. The evening of which I speak she waited for him at the Mays' in vain, for the unhappy lad had grown into a feeling of opposition to her being there, and that night the mood was so bitterly upon him he ignored her claims. Weston accompanied the girl home.

On the way he became conscious that they were followed by two men who seemed to be acting very mysteriously; coming quite near until noticed, and then immediately dropping back out of sight. This continued until our friends entered the strip

of woods, when the two unknown men separated and passed off into the shade of the trees, one upon each side of the road, and so kept silently near until Weston and Rose emerged within the light of the Anson homestead. Weston saw that his companion was nervous and frightened. Had he not feared to startle her more, he would have hailed the men and challenged an explanation. But he had his purpose. He did not enter the house, and before they parted at the door, he said:

"Rose, you must treat me as your friend. You are very unhappy. We know that we have both seen these men. If you can, you must tell me who they are and the meaning of their conduct. Have you ever been exposed to this before?"

The poor girl burst into tears. He waited quietly for her to regain composure and consent to trust him. Again he said:

"Trust your young pastor, Rose. It shall never bring you harm. I am as deeply concerned about this as your own soul."

"It is for brother I am distressed," she answered. "He must not hear of this. I don't understand why we should have enemies. I know nothing; nothing about our past and nothing about our future and nothing about those who would harass and ruin us. It is hard," she said, as she turned and looked through the window, "it is hard for those two good hearts who have been squandering, their love upon us. Sometimes I think it would be better for Willy and for them that we should

after awhile quietly disappear and leave the neighborhood to forget us."

The poor child had found vent to her feelings, and seemed willing to tell all. To Weston it was evident that this night was not her first vexation.

"Trust me further yet," he said. "All this must not smoulder alone in your own bosom. There are some of us who are going to stand by you, Rose. And now tell me whether anything like this has ever happened before."

"You remember," she said, "that hour of my terror in The Gorge. One of those following us to-night I believe is the same man who frightened me then. Nor is that all. You have asked me and I am telling you what I never told before. Some weeks ago, I was sitting alone in my room when I heard a slight noise at the window. Looking up, I saw a dark face with dark eyes fixed upon me, just as on that day when you all came to my help. In a moment I saw it no more. I tried to persuade myself that my imagination had conjured up the face; but as I listened I heard footsteps distinctly creeping away through the yard. I don't know why all this should so frighten me. It is weak and foolish; but you have asked it—and I know you are our friend—and I am ashamed of all this—but I felt like telling you."

"It is interesting me," he said, "more than you will ever know. We are not willing for you to bear your troubles alone."

The girl drew toward him. These moments of confidence were doing her good.

"I think," she said, "they took you for Willy to-night. How glad I am it was you instead of him! I don't know what is to come of this, but I fear some evil to the distracted boy. Do you know that he carries dangerous weapons? You must help me," she continued, in low, pleading tones, "to save my brother from harm. It matters but little what they may say of me, for I would not hurt them again. But Willy was trying to be a better boy. He liked you and was listening earnestly to your sermons. I did not mean to impose ourselves upon you, but you sought my confidence and I could not keep it back. And now you will not be impatient with the wounded spirit of my poor brother and condemn him in his bitterness. Do not deal hardly and coldly with him, even if he avoids you. You will help me, will you not, Mr. Weston?"

It was the fervor of an orphan's plea for her twin brother, and it only enhanced her loveliness.

"From my soul I promise you," he replied. "I don't believe there will be any great need of help. I see no sense in this foolish gossip. It will live its little day and then fade out and leave us all thinking more highly of you than ever. You must cheer up and feel less solicitude for Willy. He is a noble boy, and this may only make him a nobler man. You and I will pray for him, Rose."

"You will pray for him, Mr. Weston. God does not listen to my prayers."

With these sad words she turned away and passed within doors. Then she *had been praying.* He stood awhile where she left him; stood as if in deep thought; then started suddenly and walked with quick step back to the woods. "One of those men looked familiar to me," he murmured to himself. Carefully he searched the whole thicket through. But in vain. Whoever they were they had withdrawn at his approach.

Weston was late in reaching home and going to his bed. "No harm must come to her," he said. And again after awhile: "I am strangely interested in all this. It is a very little thing, but I am allowing it to worry me. So her soul is but saved, my work ends there. It need not matter to me what her descent or who her former associates. And again before he slept: "She trusted me," he thought, "and I must be her friend. Notwithstanding the warm hearts around her at the Ansons', and notwithstanding the kind attentions of Catherine, the child's confidence, so closely pent, gushed forth to her pastor; and, when once her words began to flow, she could not keep them back until she had told me all. I will stand by her and by Willy," he said.

I saw that week a shadow of anxiety upon Weston's face which I had not seen before. Somehow I connected this with an impression which had been for some time resting upon my mind, that the hour was coming when our church-roll must be purged. Nancy Smith also detected the shadow upon the young preacher's brow, and was troubled.

CHAPTER XIII.

MISSIONARIES.

If I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.—*The Old Man of Uz.*

EIGHT or ten years ago a family of the name of Marston moved into our neighborhood. In a short time they were followed by another of the name of Fluke. These families bought adjacent farms and were evidently well acquainted before they came. They soon let it be known that they were Christians and very zealous in the Master's cause. I called upon them some while after their arrival and invited them to church. They seemed to delight in religious conversation and told me many incidents of former labors for Christ. I must own to-day that from the first there was something a little unpleasant in their way of talking upon these subjects. I never left them without a certain dissatisfaction which I failed in those days fully to define.

They seemed inclined to be very active in the Sunday-school and the church, but for some reason never united with us. It was often spoken

of but continually deferred until we ceased to expect it. Jeremiah Fluke was exceedingly fluent upon all religious topics and on all possible occasions. As soon as opportunity offered, you would see his lugubrious face pressed far upward by his tall lank form, and you would begin to shrink from the dreary tones which soon went droning about the room and crawling over your nerves. I think in all those years I never heard him address himself to the unconverted or express the least interest in them. This was the more remarkable inasmuch as several of his grown children were known to be among the worst in the congregation. It was generally felt that the zeal of some in these households was so neutralized by the conduct of others that the families as a whole were adding but little to the moral strength of the community. The people marveled that Jeremiah Fluke exhibited no sorrow for the lives of the impenitent.

"It is awful to see Christians living as they do. I can hardly sleep. It is breaking my heart. Mine eyes run down with tears. Nobody seems to mourn. All are wed to their idols. They are light and trifling as they can be. You see them laughing as though there were no eternity. Their silks and satins rustle upon the breeze. Their ribbons shine afar. They seem to think that ascension robes are made of broadcloth. They even enter the temple doors with a smile. Woe, woe to the poor backslidden church! How few are faithful! How few are holy!"

Such was one of Jeremiah's talks to the Sunday-school. The poor children did not know who had been acting so ugly, or what was going to befall the church, or why *they* should be scolded for the faults of others. The superintendent gave the speaker a hint of this, and henceforth Fluke turned his back upon the school and denounced it as a nursery of vanity and on its road to ruin.

At another time the two families began religious services at the School House on the same night of our prayer-meeting. This was done under the pretext that they and their neighbors were too far from the church to attend regularly at that point. Many of our promptest members lived at a greater distance. The appointment bore the appearance of opposition and proved a failure. They then changed it to another night and secured sufficient attendance to keep it alive through the year. Sometimes I heard of its being protracted an entire week. My age and the pressure of duties prevented my being in their meetings. I am not aware that they ever cared for my presence.

When Weston came, there seemed to be a disposition to appropriate him and mould him to their use. He was pressed into frequent visits to their houses and to their worship. He was disposed to gratify them, but was less pleased each time he went. From him I learned the secret of their peculiarities and their errors. They claimed to have passed through a second radical change, after conversion and analagous to it, which placed

them far in advance of the majority of believers and exempted them henceforth from the common infirmities of our fallen nature. This change was instantaneous and marked, making them somehow superior to temptation and sin. There was no more doubt and spiritual drought. Life was all joy and peace and ecstasy. They stood at an elevation above the usual trials of faith. The sanctification of their souls had been immediate and complete, a second baptism of the Spirit changing their spiritual status as really and thoroughly as in the act of regeneration. Thenceforward, they were upon a plane above the common level of Christian attainment, and compassionated the mass of unpretentious believers as groveling far below amid the fogs and damps and taints of earth.

It was undoubtedly the purpose of the Flukes and the Marstons to take possession of the young pastor, win him to their views, get him converted over, and use him as an exponent of their doctrines. My colleague has not been the only minister upon whom crotchety zealots have planned similar devices. The youthful preacher as well as the old, may expect to encounter persons who are ready to court and flatter in order to gain his adhesion to some partisan aim or personal hobby. In taking charge of a church we may expect to be met by those who hold peculiar notions and ulterior designs, and who will be the most forward of all in their attentions. The minister learns after

awhile to be kind to all without permitting himself to be absorbed and governed by any.

A narrow sectary is always a propagandist. The more contracted the creed, the greater is usually the zeal for proselyting. The weightier matters of the law are forgotten while men are stickling for an unimportant dogma. The presumption of such propagandists is immense. I have seen them attempt to mould a Presbytery or entire Synod to their conceits; subordinate all things else; use every expedient to sway the members in the one narrow channel; labor with might and main to indoctrinate and secure the young ministry; talk, preach and write, and lose sight of every other interest and every other Gospel theme except the one engrossing tenet. They are always uncharitable, always intolerant, always factious, always ready to become embittered against those whom they fail to capture. Opposition to their narrow views is damnable heresy. Their little creed is the test of a standing or falling church. These men of hobbies are always unsafe, always dangerous allies, liable at any time to become rancorous enemies.

Weston was obtuse and obdurate, and came sadly short of their expectations. He had not been impressed by their claims to superior sanctity. He was too ungrateful to value extravagantly their zeal in his behalf. They failed to get him converted. He failed to appreciate Jeremiah Fluke. The drawling tones and upturned eyes and

gloomy lamentations, did not have the desired effect. The prayers of the superlatively righteous did not avail much.

On the contrary, the young minister felt it his duty on one or two occasions to bear witness for the truth in their meetings, and to expound the Scriptural doctrine upon the subject. He showed that the heart even at its best is deceitful above all things, and that man's claims to an attained perfection are pernicious dreams. He urged daily warfare, daily progress, daily victories, and asserted the utter weakness of man under his highest attainments, and enjoined an entire dependence every hour upon what has been done for him. Self-complacency in mistaken holiness, obstructed the pathway to holiness. Humility was one of the surest evidences of growth in grace. The gradual work of sanctification in the soul; the constant conflict with indwelling sin; continued watchfulness against the insurrections of the old corruption; salvation wholly and essentially and finally of grace; the felt unworthiness and the upward struggle and a progressive meetness for heaven; were vindicated from the infallible Word. All this was done modestly and delicately, but firmly and faithfully.

The next night Jeremiah Fluke was sad indeed. "Our souls," he said, "may well put on sack-cloth and ashes. How are the mighty fallen! Even the leaders in the churches are still in their sins and do not blush to own it. They set themselves

against the faithful. What is to become of the flock when the shepherds are sinking in the mire? We look away down yonder in the low-grounds and see the church-members and the preachers floundering along together far beneath us. There was one for whom I had great hope. We thought he might be brought to see the error of his ways and become a power in Israel. We loved his inexperienced youth and bore him in the arms of our stronger faith. But his eyes were blinded that he could not see. Ephraim is joined to his idols. What is to become of the people? The land is in thick darkness. Only a few are left to mourn. We still will lift our banners. We will cry aloud and spare not. Something must yet be done. The country must be delivered from false prophets. There must be a move upon the ranks of the foe."

Thus it came about. Services were protracted and the disguise was thrown aside. The church was to be reformed. The truth was at length to shine abroad. It was to shine out from a grove near the school-house. There was to be a great illumination from the grove near the school-house. Seats were arranged and a pulpit built. Here the blinded were to drop their sins and attain unto sanctification. The grand consummation was to be effected through the Marstons and Flukes and two missionaries who were imported for the purpose. The latter were to appear in wide contrast to the preachers whom

the deluded people had long been accustomed to hear. They lived under a constant inspiration from the heavens and were independent of any human culture. In fact, they despised human culture and branded it as a device of the devil. They came to the community as to a people who had long sat in darkness and who were to be astonished under the shining of these luminaries.

Christians must be awakened from their false security. Their weak hopes must be uprooted. Everybody must be engineered into a profession of perfect love, or the moral vineyard would soon be in ruins. The Marstons and Flukes with the help of the two marvelous preachers were going to save the land. Jeremiah was seen to smile for the first time since his sad residence among us. His was a very peculiar smile. It was of the transcendental holy type. It spread itself sorrowfully over his rigid yellow features like a hallowed thing conscious of the corruption around and bent upon triumph. The smile itself was yellow and yet unctuous. It would be unkind to deny that it was a smile, and one that told of a great mournful happiness existing down somewhere within.

It is not worth while to record the preachers' names. Such men are usually independent of everything by which their antecedents may be traced. Their professions and the cause they represent, entitle them to recognition by all Christians. The mystical direct endorsement of heaven was endorsement enough. At most, this together with

the endorsement of the Marstons and Flukes. Any questioning beyond these facts would have been an impertinence. Suspicions would have been an affront and a persecution of the righteous. We must take all such at their own valuation. For are they not holier than others?

Number One was a man of large stature, large features, large feet, large hands, and loud, thunderous voice. He looked as if he meant to beat the world into perfect shape under his heavy fists. With every gesture he seemed to feel the ability to throw holiness out all around him from some deep reservoir within. And yet notwithstanding his colossal figure, the shadow of dyspepsia rested like a cloud of evil over all. I can not vouch that it was dyspepsia. There is a peculiar look which stamps itself upon the face of all abnormal superstitious religionists. A belief in witchcraft, in apparitions, in spiritualism, and in all forms of extreme and distorted views of religious truth, carries with it its own impress upon the countenance. Thus nature marks the fanatic unmistakably. Number Two was the reverse of Number One in everything but this latter characteristic. He was small, dark, nervous and fussy, a lean and squeaking echo of the former. He sang in nasal tones and exhorted in shrill fiery outbursts of jangled rhetoric. The two preachers differed as widely in some respects from each other and from Jeremiah Fluke as could well be imagined; yet the same peculiar air of sect and sanctity rested over all.

Open air meetings were a novelty in the neighborhood. They had been advertised with sensational placards posted the whole country over. A fair specimen of these had been nailed to the church-door, and read as follows: "Antichrist unveiled—The Christian world on trial—The pure Gospel at last—Props knocked from under the hypocrite—Let all at ease in Zion take the alarm."

Curiosity, of course, brought many together to see and hear. The Grove became a place of resort for the idle and pleasure-seeking. With the managers a crowd seemed to be the chief object, no matter what the motive that drew them there. Number One led off with a sermon from the text: "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth, hath not seen Him, neither known Him." Number Two followed from the words: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for His seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God." All other Scriptures which qualified and explained the surface meaning were disregarded, and the literal construction pressed to the utmost limits. One of the speakers was not aware that he had sinned for ten years; the other was convinced that he had kept all the commandments for fifteen years. They had both lived for a long time in a state of uncertainty and instability like the poor wavering masses in the churches; now on the mount, now in the valley; now in the performance of duty, now in the neglect of it; now praising and now sighing; until they heard of

the higher life, and then they went to God and found it. Since that hour it was all changed. They were happy all the time. They had left earth and suspense and iniquity far behind. Satan troubled them no more. They were soaring above all the besetments of ordinary Christians. How they pitied the unenlightened in the churches!

That yellow smile again suffused the sallow face of Jeremiah Fluke.

It occurred to some that these men preached themselves and their own experiences rather than Christ. But perhaps this was uncharitable toward the sanctified. It grieved the speakers' souls to think of the deep ignorance upon the religious world and from which they had themselves escaped. Men were drifting along content with their low estate, perhaps never converted at all, perhaps still in the gall of bitterness. What the preachers called faith might be nothing but carnal security. They put the people to sleep and kept them asleep. They cheated God's children out of their rightful transports. They quieted the conscience when only half converted. They taught that simply believing in Jesus was what God asked that this was the only change needed, and that to just keep on believing and trusting was the Christian life. These speakers had come to tell of something nobler and higher, something of which the preachers had not told, because they were still in ignorance of the change themselves. They might be educated and dress fine, but they were

far behind many of God's humbler children in the true wisdom.

Jeremiah again perpetrated that yellow smile. Perhaps it was of deeper saffron than ever before. That smile gave promise of a yellow laugh some day, if the supposition be not sacrilege.

It was absolutely distressing to see the poor, misguided people confiding in teachers who were unable to point them to their rightful inheritance. Blind leaders of the blind, both were in the ditch. It was a pity to see them fattening upon salaries which they did not earn. The audience were rged to pay no more money for being deceived. A brighter day was dawning. Light was breaking over Christendom. God was raising up men and women from among the people themselves and qualifying them for the great work. They would stir the nations and shake the solid ground. The trumpet was to be blown. Dead churches were to be awakened. All were urged to throw their weak faith to the winds. Your still and quiet believing may be fooling you. Oh, for the mighty storm which may arouse you into terror and fright, and turn your stupid religion inside out, and shake you through and through until you get that second change which shall bring you into perfect peace and enable you to sin no more!

Jeremiah lifted his transcendental smile up to his full altitude. He was glad that he had lived to see this day. He rejoiced that his ears had heard the pure Gospel reverberating over these wilds, and

stirring the beasts from their lairs, and breaking the stagnation of centuries. He had borne record long. He had lifted his feeble voice in vain. In vain had Mrs. Marston and Mrs. Fluke set godly examples by appearing in the assemblies of the people in sun-bonnets and calico. The jewels and gros-grains still profaned the sanctuary. The idolaters would not hear. They and their leaders owned that they still sinned. He cleared his skirts of the vile thing. His last twenty years had been years full of joy and good works. They had been spent upon the borders of glory and beyond the power of the tempter. And now the day of redemption for this sin-stained community was at hand.

It is not pleasant for one of my age to write these things down. Standing upon the outer verge of life, each day I deprecate more and more the vagaries of extremists who, under mistaken angular zeal, interpose themselves across the path of pure and charitable and symmetrical Christianity. Unquestionably, they are often honest in their opinions and desire to serve the Master. It is sad that these energies should be squandered in heterodox crusades which can bring no victories to the truth and no honor to our common Lord. The extravagant notions of these sectaries are often their own antidote; but the fervor and labor, which might have been expended in a better cause, are wasted. Standing where I do, these side thrusts at the truth by those who pretend to hold it in greater purity,

are looking more and more lamentable to my soul every year. From these frontiers of the eternal world, the insurrections of petty, pretentious parties, claiming to be some great thing, and then frothing through their narrow channel and dying along the shore, appear mean indeed, and small and puerile. For some good reason they are permitted to live their little day. Perhaps it is that God's unadulterated truth may shine forth more resplendently from the fire of conflict when the wood, hay and stubble are burning up.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE UNCO GUID.

I have seen an end of all perfection.—*Author of 119th Psalm.*

THESE zealots had their admirers. They were undoubtedly earnest men, and earnestness always impresses the multitude. One of the preachers was honest in his creed. It is not difficult to throw together isolated passages of Scripture, regardless of context and strained to a point, so as to appear to the unwary hearer clear demonstrations of even the wildest theories. For many minds it is easier to accept these superficial interpretations than to go to the Bible itself to learn the mind of the Spirit. Fluent and rapid quotations of Scripture will sometimes give weight to a discourse which is fallacious from beginning to end. Often the weaker the cause, the greater the ostensible reverence for the Word. The unskilled and credulous are deceived.

We heard of quite a number of adherents gained from the more ignorant on the outskirts of the parish. And still another class was deeply affected

by these holiness meetings. Among God's children are frequently found those whose religion is a passion; and, when not a passion, nothing. Their hope is based upon feeling rather than upon the promises. They live upon emotion rather than upon principle. Happiness is their aim instead of duty. These were agitated under the violent appeals of the preachers; and even more so under their claims of constant transports and raptures Yielding themselves to the prevalent excitement, courting and cultivating it, they finally thought that they had attained, in some climax of feeling, to the new change of which the preachers told. This would last until the emotions died away or until some terrible fall should prove their dream of perfection a delusion.

Mr. Weston was kept busy. These are the occasions which test a pastor's tact and fidelity. To supply the children of the kingdom bread and fish, is easier sometimes than to guard them from stones and scorpions. It is hard to look forth upon the fields which we have diligently prepared and sown with the choicest of the grain, and then see the messenger of Satan trampling boldly over our waiting furrows and scattering them broadcast with tares. When error comes in the guise of truth and injects its poison into the midst of our dearest labors, the minister hears his loudest call to patience and prayer and faithfulness in every good work.

Upon some of our younger members an impression had been made. A few of these were in that

critical phase of experience when, the early fervor having lulled, they were awakened to the startling knowledge that the tempter was still following them. Henry Ware was one of these. He had thought that regeneration was holiness. In his first love he had believed that he could never sin again. The voice of the old inclinations for awhile was drowned. He had no conception of the Christian life as a warfare. The awakening was bitter. When the trial came and he found that he was still subject to the besetments of evil, and even inclined to yield, he was almost stunned. There arose a dark fear that he had never been truly converted.

There are many Henry Wares in every congregation. And they need very tender care. The meeting found this young man and others in a dangerous state of mind. The missionaries seemed delighted to encounter just such cases. The more in number and the deeper in gloom, the better. In dealing with the distressed babes in Christ who had been overtaken in the dark, they were jubilant and seemed almost to triumph on the anguish of the unsanctified. In pleasing contrast with this, I was glad to see that Weston was as tender with Henry as with a child, held up before him more sweetly than ever an all-sufficient Savior, and never rested until he saw the youth calmly and tranquilly reposing his trust where he had put it first. Through him he found out others and guarded them from pretentious error.

To my great surprise, one of the best members of our church, mature in years and of undoubted piety, drifted for awhile under the influence of these men. Of course, to good people there is something very attractive in the idea of perfect holiness attainable suddenly in this life by some mystical process of consecration. Whatever the terms and paraphrases under which the doctrine may be stated, this idea of entire sanctification now possible and promptly reached by an instantaneous experience, is the one that underlies it all and captivates. Jane Ralston was one of the most consistent Christians I have ever known. Her life was beautiful in its even tenor of duty, founded upon a trust beautiful in its simplicity. If ever faith was childlike and implicit, hers seemed to be. For many years it had not even occurred to her to question her Savior's love and her safety in that love. Until now no cloud had arisen to obscure her reliance upon His finished work. But she knew that she was still a sinner; and this knowledge had kept her very humble before God while very abundant in good works.

In listening to these new lights, she found that they boasted of something she had never known. Like Paul, she felt that she had not yet attained, neither was already perfect; and she knew that her admitted and lamented imperfections still needed the sanctifying grace of God. They on the contrary seemed to have passed through some other transformation securing them from a tendency

to sin. In their earnest, zealous way, they exhorted to something better than her quiet trust. She began to fear that her calm, undemonstrative faith was a delusion after all. The good woman was thrown from her safe, well-tried moorings, out upon the open sea. This was a triumph indeed for Jeremiah Fluke. The yellow smile was verging upon a broad grin. Weston found the good woman bewildered and torn and almost prostrate. They had sown distrust in her path, and it had taken root. She was suspecting her former placid hope. The young pastor had never been with her before without having his own faith strengthened by her unquestioning confidence in the promises of God. We need not have marveled if he had grown impatient toward these disturbers of the peace of believing souls.

Milly Sears had been in poor health for many years. Her disease was of a type to superinduce despondency of mind and often to cloud her religious frames. We, who knew her best, appreciated her conscientious religious principles, her perseverance in the use of the appointed means of grace, her avoidance of sin and her earnest desire to glorify God through faith in Jesus Christ; and we well understood that it was the morbid condition of her physical system which caused the melancholy to which she was occasionally subject. These oscillations in her religious frames often brought great distress. Her friends had labored long to save her from making an idol of comfort

and to keep her thoughts fixed upon Christ instead. Unfortunately she became fascinated with these men's promises of constant ecstatic happiness, and her mind was introverted from an all-sufficient Savior in upon her own troubled moods.

These men never paused to consider Milly's physical infirmities. They would have despised such suggestion while bent upon their one purpose. While the poor woman had far greater need of a wise physician than of a religious empiric, they failed entirely to get into sympathy with her real condition, and aggravated her sufferings by their spiritual nostrums. In the public meetings they brought her prominently forward to the front seat for prayer; and there they addressed her with flaming appeals, and expatiated upon her darkness as the penalty of her sins. They visited her house and continued their exercises until after midnight. Thus they pursued the poor nervous woman until they had her in the depths of hysterical despair. Jeremiah Fluke pointed to her as a victim of the backslidden churches, and plumed himself upon his superiority to all such weaknesses. The godly life weighed nothing in the scales—ecstatic joys were the all of Christianity.

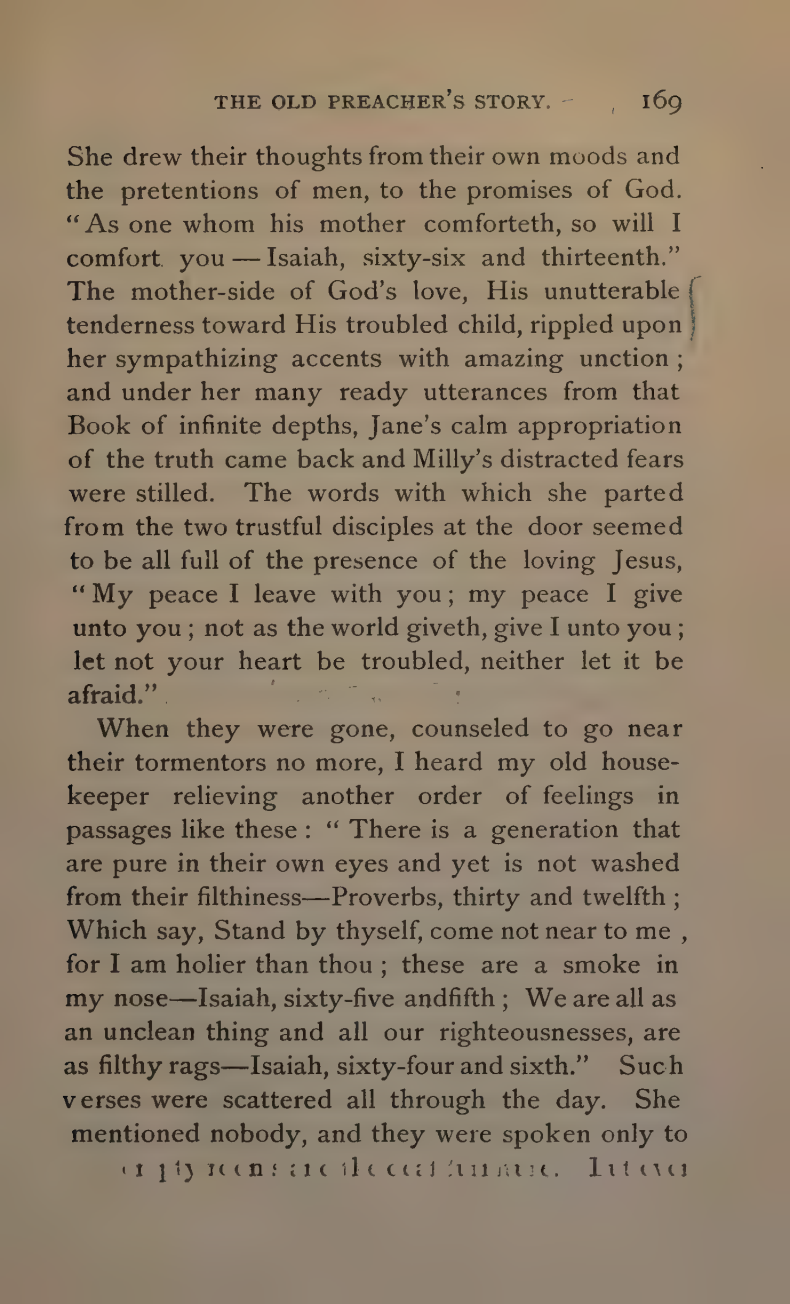
I suggested to Weston that he bring Jane and Milly to see Mother Howe. Her kind, motherly soul enveloped her unhappy sisters at once in an atmosphere of soothing, cheering love and of tender Scripture. "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." The

ancient syllables seemed to fall from her lips in rare sweetness as if dipped anew in the dews of heaven. The doubting, clouded Christian always appealed very deeply to her heart. "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep—Romans, twelfth and fifteenth." It was her own way of dealing with the various phases of human experience. "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day —Second Corinthians, four and sixteen." The allusion to the outward man would remain obscure, did we not know that the kind soul was busying herself in the preparation of a certain tea which she knew to be good for Milly's shattered nerves. Her wise consideration first dealt with the gloomy disciple as with a sick woman. "Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses—Matthew, eight and seventeenth." There was medicine in her very tones. Under the grace of God, her gentle teas and her gentler Scriptural words came as double healing balms to both body and soul.

I knew very well Mother Howe's indignation against those whose religious charlatanism had laid on burdens which they could never remove, but of these zealots she said nothing. It would do the needy ones no good to plaster their wounds with the errors of others. She talked to them more wholesomely of Jesus and His great faithfulness. "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love — Jeremiah, thirty-one and third."

She drew their thoughts from their own moods and the pretentions of men, to the promises of God. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you — Isaiah, sixty-six and thirteenth." The mother-side of God's love, His unutterable tenderness toward His troubled child, rippled upon her sympathizing accents with amazing unction; and under her many ready utterances from that Book of infinite depths, Jane's calm appropriation of the truth came back and Milly's distracted fears were stilled. The words with which she parted from the two trustful disciples at the door seemed to be all full of the presence of the loving Jesus, "My peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you; let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

When they were gone, counseled to go near their tormentors no more, I heard my old housekeeper relieving another order of feelings in passages like these: "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes and yet is not washed from their filthiness—Proverbs, thirty and twelfth; Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou; these are a smoke in my nose—Isaiah, sixty-five andfifth; We are all as an unclean thing and all our righteousnesses, are as filthy rags—Isaiah, sixty-four and sixth." Such verses were scattered all through the day. She mentioned nobody, and they were spoken only to



without intended auditors, and using so exactly the words of Scripture, these were the severest reflections I ever heard her make upon any one. Evidently her mind was more than ordinarily stirred against those who had clouded the faith of her sisters.

The text in the grove that night was as follows: "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying peace, peace, when there is no peace." But Jane and Milly were not there to hear. Jeremiah Fluke was bereft of his yellow smile. The work went on however until a score or more professed sanctification. Thus they challenged the scrutiny of the community, and the community were not slow to agree that the majority of these professing Christians had sadly needed a change of some sort. There were certainly some good people among them, but most of them were very unpromising material for spotless saintship. The only person of any prominence from our church, who claimed to have attained to it under their preaching, was Jake Askins.

As was his custom with other strangers, Askins had at once become very friendly with these and had won their favor. They could not have enlisted a more capable ally in enlightening them upon the shortcomings of the church. He was duly appreciated. Intimate with the Marstons and Flukes, he claimed the privilege of entertaining their preachers at his house. Our old acquaintance soon grew to be a favorite with them,

adopted their views, and in due time announced that he had obtained the blessing. In their estimation he was henceforth in sanctity far in advance of the rest of us. Jake was held forth from their pulpit as an example worthy of all imitation, and his fellow members were urged to follow where he had so nobly led. He tried to draw our young people to his house to meet the preachers, and thereby bring them more immediately under their influence. But Weston quietly defeated his plans. Only a very small party, and these of our weakest and most inconsistent, followed him. A little clique henceforth of malcontents.

I should not omit to mention that Elder Lardner had attended every service. We did not know what to think of this, but after a little it was explained. Always shrewed in reading character, he had suspected Number Two from the beginning. Fluke thought the Elder favorably impressed and became hopeful of his conversion. Through him, Lardner became acquainted with the preachers, and the more he saw of the pert young man the more he disliked him. The latter was very reticent about his antecedents; but accidentally he let slip some clue to his former life which our Elder followed up until his first impressions were justified by letters of positive identification. I will not darken my narrative with the facts. He was exposed and the meeting abruptly closed.

Half-truths are always dangerous. A semblance to the truth gives error respectability. There *is* a higher life. Christians are not what they ought to be. God is calling His own to a purer and holier walk. The living way slopes upward. Our young pastor had been portraying to us most attractively from Sabbath to Sabbath the privileges of believers, and trying to win us all forward in the divine life. The gradual work of sanctification, constant progress, grace upon grace, strength to strength, many new baptisms of the Holy Spirit, were presented as taught from the Blessed Book. I had thought that we were amid cheering indications of evangelical growth. They that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God, says the Psalmist, and the watchmen were already rejoicing in the evidences of the flourishing. Not spasmodic and capricious, but safe and sure.

It was very artful in the enemy at this juncture to attempt diversion from the good work by a counterfeit of the coveted blessing through the agency of professed reformers of the Church. This is a favorite device of the powers of evil, and one that is very trying to the true friends of the Gospel. With years we learn to feel no discouragement under such new activity on the part of the great adversary, but rather to regard his greater restlessness as an augury of coming good. May my anticipation be fulfilled.

CHAPTER XV.

CATHERINE AND GAINES.

In her tongue is the law of kindness.—*The Words of King Lemuel.*

WHILE influences were at work to try our patience and our faith, the Lord was guarding His own cause. Heresies might ruffle the surface waters and attract public attention, but there were deeper depths which these little tempests could not disturb. However busy the enemies of the truth and whatever their reproaches against the Church of God, her sovereign Head has ever His chosen ones within her pale, hid away from the buzzing traducers, pursuing their quiet duties undisturbed by the foolish besiegers, and too happy in their staid routine of godly avocations to notice the thin bubbles that are rising and bursting around. This still, deep, intenser life of the faithful in Zion is a sublime thing as it moves on unheralded and unnoted down the history of redemption. It makes no noise. It chants no pæans to its own glory. The decriers of the Lamb's bride see it not and pass it by. But it lives; breathes on; survives the ages; and levels

the graves of those who told and told again of God's Church in ruins.

One bright sunshiny day while the man with the yellow smile was enlarging in The Grove upon the culpable inactivity of professing Christians, and denouncing the whole community as weighed down with heavy slumber, our Catherine, entirely unconscious of the Jeremiad, was working silently in her flower-garden and preparing some of her choicest blooms for transplanting. The voluble zealot would have seen no heroism and no holiness in that. To his eye it would have appeared only a sinful worldly amusement. Her well-stored basket was not light. One soft hand lifted it, and in the other she carried a sharp hatchet.

It was a deed which will never be emblazoned in song. The world will not care to notice my Catherine as she walked away down the lane. Men and women who boast of the good they do, will never hear her voice in rivalry. They who see no merit anywhere but in their own little sects, will be met with no protests from her lips. Like many an humble servant of the Master, she will challenge no praise; she will utter no defense. And yet I opine no sweeter flower bloomed in her basket that day, none more modest and beautiful, than the thoughts and feelings which were astir within her soul and blossoming all the way as she went upon her singular errand. And all about her bosom and all about her footsteps, was ascending up to heaven a perfume of which the world was

unconscious and of which the world was not worthy.

A low, soft air was singing itself prayerfully upon her lips, while she walked alone. Now and then she sat and rested. The crickets hopped about her unalarmed. Again she took her basket and went forward toward the fulfillment of her purpose. The birds seemed to choose the path she chose, and to pour forth their rarest notes. She stopped by a little prattling brook and with her white palm scooped up the sparkling water and sprinkled it upon her treasured flowers, as if baptizing them to some hallowed purpose in the name of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. And the blooms were only the sweeter for it, like the frail babes of our love whom we consecrate with the pure crystal drops to the praise of the tender Shepherd of the lambs. The odors of the fields and the sweets which she carried, blended themselves together and went on up like mingled incense toward the windows of heaven.

As soon as she could, Catherine turned aside from the public highway and took a hidden path which passed off by hedge and hollow to the right. Perhaps it was to escape the sun's rays now growing warmer every hour. Perhaps it was because she cared for no eye to rest upon her deed—none but the eye of God. She seemed to know the obscure path which was leading farther and farther from the settled country and winding down into the denser woods. It would seem that she had

explored it before. Her basket grew heavier and she had frequently to rest by bush and mossy bank. Directly a white pillar of cloud floated up from the West and seemed to pause above her. The old preacher cares for no sweeter picture than that of my Catherine as there she sat upon the ground, the blessed calm of a heavenly thought upon her face, and the notes of the trustful anthem just moving her mouth and her breast. I wish that my—ah me, again the past surges back. I wish that Weston could have seen her.

After awhile, she found her way, as you and I could not have found it, to that tangled mass of thorns and briers where some time ago we saw another and different soul standing in strange mood and venting his threats and regrets upon the late hours of night. The sharp points clung to her dress, as if to hold her back, and rent great holes; but she pressed on until in the center of the thicket she stood by the little grave. There, beneath the forest mould, the child of five years was sleeping; all alone in the wild wood, uncomplainingly waiting until the trump of the angel should recall him to companionship with his kind. The neighborhood had felt it to be the freak of a madman when the embittered father turned away from all sympathy and laid his darling doggedly in that dismal place. One kind heart had wept for him in his desolation. The cheerless cabin was often upon her mind, and she longed to do him good.

The Church and its ordinances were not reach-

ing him. He repelled and kept them at a distance, living outside and apart from the Gospel influences, moving in a different sphere, and permitting no approach by the ordinary means of grace. Such souls are found here and there in every community. The cities are full of them. They dwell beneath the shadows of our churches, and yet are no more reached by them than if they lived in the wilds of Africa. It is the problem of the times. It is the crucial test of our processes of Evangelization. These heathen are at our doors and do not seek us. We do not seek them. And yet they are dying and are immortal! What is to be done?

Catherine had remembered the one unblighted spot of tenderness in the heart of Gaines; a tenderness wrenched and distorted, but alive and green. Her sympathies could not desert the lorn sinner whose heart was still bleeding by a little grave. While others forgot him and virtually put him beyond the hope of redemption, she longed and yearned that he might some day know of the consolations which the Gospel brings. He had repulsed her often. She knew that he had been sorely tried. She knew that his nature was sadly warped. She was aware that he was very wicked. But there was that little grave, and yonder was a tender Savior looking down upon a sorrowing father. She would not despair. And again to-day it was heart appealing to heart and meeting it upon its own ground. Was the problem of the age being solved?

It matters not if the strokes were unskillful with which she labored to clear away the uncouth growth from over the short mound. We need not wonder if many blows fell astray and were wasted. The fair hands and tapering fingers do not look as if made for such rude work. The hatchet began to wear the delicate flesh into blisters. Now and then a thorn touched the little hand, piercing the tender skin. But there was no faltering in her purpose. The red blood-drops oozed from the wounds and spotted her beautiful fingers here and there. The dear little hand still plies its work; and slowly, almost imperceptibly, impression is made upon the harsh vegetation.

There was one who heard the earnest strokes. Not often had any human being cared to come so near. His ear was only the more sensitive because of the direction whence the sounds proceeded. The rough man started suddenly. It was not a face you would wish to encounter in your forests. He hurried forward, crouching as he went. The two fierce eyes burned beneath their shaggy brows and peered through the bushes like a hyena's. Catherine continued her work unaware of his approach. With clinched teeth, he crept nearer and nearer as if to spring upon her. He saw she was cutting away the rank growth which he had planted and in whose dark masses he had felt a misanthropic pride. With spasmodic start, he seemed to discover who it was. He paused, still unseen, and appeared to be contending with conflicting emotions.

"The time is come!" he muttered to himself, and crept away as silently as he had approached. When some distance off, he drew a large knife, and deliberately cut and trimmed a huge hickory club. "It can be no worse than what I have done before," h said. "I like her and I hate her. She has tried me far enough. She is too good for this planet anyway. Gaines and that woman are not fit to live in the same world. She torments me before my time. I'll send her where I sent *him* on before!"

Again with his heavy club he went back toward her. He bent near the ground, and his careful steps made no sound. "I wish it was anybody but her," he said, as he crept along. "I wish it was that holy Jake Askins. I wish it was the suspicious Lardner. I wish it was *anybody* but her. And yet she worries me most of all. She shall not come between me and my boy." And thus he came near, his face flashing with rage.

The low, sweet tune was once more humming upon Catherine's lips. Cutting away the briers and thorns had not been her only work. With her hatchet she had chopped the ground, torn out the roots, and mellowed the soil. In prepared places she had planted a number of the blooms from her basket. They stood up fresh and cheerful around the head of the little grave. The rough man saw them and stopped as if seized by a strong hand. "He loved them!" he whispered. For a moment Gaines stood irresolute, almost trembling, and then

turned again and moved stealthily away. "He loved them! he loved them!" he almost hissed from his teeth. "Have I not thought," he said, "that maybe it would not be so lonesome for my boy if that good woman would come some time and stand by his side? I wonder if the child can see her and her flowers?"

He looked at his club and shuddered. When he thought himself beyond hearing, he flung it from him to the ground. For awhile he went slowly and thoughtfully toward his hut. But his moods swept over him like whirlwinds. "She shall not have him! She wants to win my boy. She believes he sees her. And perhaps he does, and thinks more of her than me. She shall no longer harass me in this way!"

And the third time he stole back angrily toward her. Fierce nd threatening, he came almost near enough to touch her; but she was absorbed in her work and had not seen him. The solemn air now and then accompanied her strokes. The grave was nearly surrounded with flowers. The red wounds were all over her white hands, and Gaines saw them. He knew that they must be sore. He almost held his breath. This is the woman he would have murdered! Just then he saw her grasp one of the poisonous vines and try to tear it away from its root. With a bound he sprang before her and seized her hands.

"Stop, woman!" he cried. "Do you know you are killing yourself? Don't you know that every-

thing about Tom Gaines is full of death?" He caught the vine and snatched it from her. "Foolish woman, why are you here? Why persist in running after a maniac? Do you know that you have come near bleeding your life out on that grave today? Go home and let me alone! You know not who I am! Even yet the grave of my boy may kill you. I did not plant them for you; but all this which you have been handling is green and black with poison."

He now held her wrists as tenderly as her mother could have held them, and with his own hand he stroked hers as if to brush the poison away and absorb it into his.

"These little hands had no business in this hard work," he said, almost softly. "There, and there, and there, the skin is rubbed away, and I expect the poison rubbed in. Woman, why are you here? Why will you distract me still?"

It will not do to say that Catherine was not startled when he sprang so suddenly to her side. But when she saw it was Gaines, she recovered herself and faced him with her usually pleasant smile. She had never feared him, and, least of all, desired it to appear so now.

"The resting-places of little children should be beautiful," she said. "They look that way in the Gospel. If it were my brother, I would want the blossoms all around him just like this. And then when the Lord shall touch the grave and the little one shall awake, he would come up amid the salutations of the flowers."

"But he's not your brother," Gaines answered. "He belongs to me—to me alone! No one else shall have any part in him. Woman, go home and let us alone."

"No," she said pleasantly, "not until we have finished our work. I am not quite done and am awkward, and you must help me. I am so glad you have come. The little boy would be pleased, maybe, to see his father talking cheerily and working cheerfully about his little body. Your strong arm can easily cut this stump out of my way. I want to set some of my sweetest roses just here."

He hesitated. It would be a great change. Then he looked at her sore hands and took the hatchet. Under his hard blows the obstructions quickly yielded. In silence he was clearing away the bushes which he himself had planted. Now and then she consulted him about the arrangement of the flowers around the grave; but he refused to offer suggestions. "Do as you please," he growled. After awhile he took a lily, without any word from her, and selected a place for it.

"His little hands are lying just about here," he said.

Catherine told of a scene long ago when the corpse of a child lay in an Eastern home, and the heart of a father was almost breaking. It was an only child, and all at once the house was dark and desolate. The cries of the mourners were heard. There lay the withered form, the face as cold as marble, and the light from the dear eyes gone out.

The voice of a friend is heard—"She is not dead but sleepeth." He came to the side of the corpse with the weeping father. He reached out His hand, a hand before long to be torn with nails, and took the icy hand of the child in His. His voice again said—"Arise." The life came back. The heart began to beat. Healthy smiles bloomed over her cheek. In a moment she was in her father's arms.

"Did you say it was an only child?" asked the man, amid his blows.

"Yes, an only one," she answered softly. After a little she told of a funeral procession coming out of a little city far away. They were carrying an only son to his burial. The only living parent was following, sad and disconsolate. The light of existence was gone. Then a stranger met them in the way—there just in the time of need. His compassions warmed toward the bereaved, as they always do. He halted the procession. He touched the bier. There was no longer any corpse. There was no burial that day. The form just now cold in death, walked back with the rejoicing crowd, arm in arm with the dear one who had been bewailing him.

"Did you say it was an only son?" asked Gaines.

She told him gently that it was an only son.

"Did you say it was an only parent?" he inquired again, as he continued to work about the grave.

She told him that the other parent had been taken away before, and that only these two had remained in the widowed home.

"And who was the man that was so great a doctor?" he asked again, incredulously.

"He, too, was an only son," she answered. "He once lived in a beautiful land, happy and blest. About thirty years before, He had given up His throne, and had come down here because of His feeling for the sorrowing of earth. Here He suffered as no one else ever suffered, before or since. All the woes of everybody fell on Him. He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. The troubles of fathers and mothers and all the little children gathered over Him until they crushed Him. He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities. He had come from the the bosom of a loving Father. After years of anguish, He died a terrible death. He was cut off out of the land of the living. His Father had surrendered Him to all this because of His deep love for poor sinful men and women."

Gaines had not looked up from his work until now. "It is pretty as a fairy tale," he said. "How do you know it was an only son?"

"Because the Bible tells us—God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

The man appeared thoughtful, and went on with his work until the flowers were all planted. The

grave looked pleasing and pretty. Then he spoke with a skeptical smile—"I wish your wonderful being hadn't forgotten to come this way when I was digging this dark hole. I would like for His hand to have been tried on *him!*"

"He is coming this way some day," answered Catherine solemnly. "Your little boy will hear His voice. After a while this grave is going to open, and the sweet little fellow will come forth all bright and smiling and radiant—the same and more than the same. The Savior has gone to prepare a place for him. These woods will be exchanged for Paradise. There will be no thorns there. And then your little Sammy will look around for his father and want him to go up with him."

"Do you," he suddenly ejaculated, "do you count upon meeting with your own buried loved ones in that day?"

"I do," she said calmly.

"And do you expect to live with them and talk with them?"

"I certainly do," she answered. Her countenance was as serene and trustful as the sculptor's dream of hope.

"Woman, do you know that you are talking to a demon? Set your mind at rest. There is no salvation for Tom Gaines. God despises Tom Gaines. He knows what you ought to have known long ago. If you have been telling me the truth, you are bound to know some day. The old

preacher's son will tell you, if I don't. I had rather you'd learn it now than when our graves are bursting. You shall no longer worry yourself with the thought that there is any chance for the wretch. You shall know me as I am!"

He strode across the grave and grasped her shoulder and turned her fiercely around. He put his wild face close to hers and hissed something into her ear. The birds upon the branches heard it not. The flowers bloomed on as before. There was no thunder in the sky. The poor girl shuddered, turned pale, took one unsteady step, and sat down upon the grave. All her blood seemed to have gone in upon her heart. One hand was upon her breast, and one upon the grave supporting herself from falling.

"There; I knew I would do it," he said. "Now you see your Scripture talk can never reach my case. I have slain you among your own flowers, here above the bones of my boy."

He stood a moment irresolute. Then he rushed away, tearing himself as he went; found his gourd; and hurried back with it full of fresh water from the spring. The paleness was subsiding. She took the gourd from that hand, drank and handed it back to him.

"Thank you," she said, and looked up at him without shrinking. Her composure was returning, and a new pity came out upon her face. "I knew that you needed a Savior." She spoke gently and low. "I felt that some dark trouble was upon

you. Now you *must* listen and accept this Savior. You have shown me your need more than I have ever seen it. I am going home to pray for you as never before. You must not die unforgiven!"

"Do you want me saved?" he cried. He stood looking at her in blank wonder. "Do you want me to go to the same heaven where you and *he* will be? Woman, don't look at me so pitifully. I can stand anything but that. Go and tell the people, and let me meet the fate I deserve. I challenge the laws of men. Your Christianity does not reach my case. And yet, if you could forgive me, I would almost expect the forgiveness of God!"

She arose. The struggle seemed over. She came near and took his coarse hand. "For a moment I was weak," she said, "and it seemed hard to bear. But now you must listen to me. I shall not rest until you are safe in Christ. He freely pardons, and with His pardon He teaches us to forgive. I would not dare to talk to you of Him, unless I had already forgiven you from my heart. You have treated Him far worse than you have ever treated me. I shall tell no one of this but God. By the grave of your own only-begotten son, God's only-begotten Son has met you this day and offered salvation. He feels for your sad life. He was numbered with the transgressors. And now good-bye. Water these flowers to-morrow; and, while here, think of Him who is willing

to restore you and your boy to each other's arms once more."

The sun was sinking low. She shook his hand, and taking her basket and hatchet started back toward her home. The tune no longer came from her lips. Slightly paler perhaps than when she walked away in the morning, but no one could have discovered any other difference in face or manner. Weston met her in the lawn and, taking her basket, walked back with her. She talked cheerfully of his work and plans. None but the Omniscient knew the history of her day.

Not long after, she was attacked with severe illness. The shock to her nervous system had proven too great for her. Worse still, the poison had taken effect and was burning through her veins. Painful eruptions came out upon the sm ll hands, extending up her round arms and spreading over bosom and face. She spoke pleasantly of her ignorance of the Botany of the woods and of unfortunate experiments, but told no more. The neighborhood grew anxious over her. Rose came and staid, and she was truly a faithful nurse. If Catherine died, where could she ever find so near and so sweet a friend! Weston saw them often together, listened to their words of love, and thought the attachment beautiful indeed.

One evening in the twilight, Gaines was heard at the back door inquiring about Catherine's condition. It was talked of as one of the neighborhood wonders. Catherine requested, if he came again,

that he should be brought in to see her. Not long after, Rose answered a low knock, and found the rough face at the door. She told him of Catherine's desire to see him. For the first time in many years, he entered another habitation than his own. He came and stood by the bed in silence. With difficulty she spoke and thanked him for his interest in her. In case of her death, she begged him to think of Weston and Rose as his friends, and again pointed him to Christ. Catherine was at her worst. He saw her face scarred, bloated, and disfigured, and he was intensely moved. Large tears grew and grew in each eye until they rolled out and fell upon his beard. He dashed them hurriedly away. They had come upon him as great, strange, unaccustomed things.

CHAPTER XVI.

ANSON'S CIRCLE OF PRAYER.

But the hour cometh and now is when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.—*Our Savior.*

AS Weston came to be better known in their homes, he grew upon the affections of the people more and more. His visits were almost wholly pastoral, not often remaining more than an hour, and using the hour conscientiously for the honor of the Master. He possessed an invaluable faculty for turning conversation into religious channels and interesting families upon such sacred subjects. This was done without apparent effort and without abruptness. After a few calls, the people learned to expect and enjoy it. He never left a company without reading the Scriptures and prayer. A pocket Bible was carried with him, and usually taken in his hand awhile before beginning worship. The families grew used to this and began then to collect their members together without embarrassment to him or them. In his prayer there would be an allusion to every indi-

vidual of the household—never omitting the baptized children. As in other things, much depends in a minister's visits upon commencing right. Such habits established at the start, there will be but little trouble afterwards.

I sometimes think that a great deal of valuable time is wasted by preachers in social visiting. I suspect that an entire day is seldom to edification. These long visits are apt to degenerate into a species of secular and society gossip which elevates neither minister nor people. Weston was never stern, stiff or affectedly sanctimonious, but he never allowed his office to be forgotten by himself or others.

The pulpit was his throne. For it he reserved his chief strength and by far the largest part of his time. Trying not to forget other duties, he watched religiously against the interference of apparently rival duties with his solemn preparation for the sacred desk. The foolishness of preaching by which believers are to be saved, did not to him mean foolish preaching. Only under the most direct providences would he ever consent to come before a congregation either wearied in body or mind, or with unbeaten oil for the sanctuary. You could feel the freshness and vigor of his thought and spirit from the moment he entered the church. A minister should arrange his studies and engagements conscientiously to this end. If possibly avoided, it is a sin to go into the pulpit tired.

Of late, the sermons were evidently warming. I noticed that his themes were taking one general

direction, as if laying solid foundation for something yet to come. The greatness and sovereignty of God, eternal life and eternal death, man as totally depraved, the necessity and nature of the new birth, justification by simple faith in Christ, were presented in various forms from Sabbath to Sabbath. There was nothing dull or cold in his treatment of these subjects. While sin is in the world, God's saving doctrines can never wear out. The preacher need not think that he is done with them when he has concentrated the energies and learning and prayer of a laborious week upon a single sermon. We must return to them again and again. I saw that Weston always preached doctrine experimentally, and experimental religion doctrinally. Thought and heart were never divorced. And the attention of his hearers did not fail him.

In the midst of this healthly condition of the pulpit ministrations, and running parallel with them, sprang up a noiseless movement among the people which I believe to have been great with results in the coming days. God often brings mighty issues out of beginnings so small that the busy world does not notice them. The church too, absorbed in her grander schemes, fails to appreciate the little rills of influence which flow on with ripples and sparkling wavelets unobserved, until they gather and burst into irresistible torrents. The great Reformation was born in a monk's cell by the side of a chained Bible, and the

great Revival of the eighteenth century began in the obscure home of a faithful mother. God's promises still seek the truly and modestly pious. The Divine inspiration broods over secret and humble places. The meek shall inherit the earth.

Anson had grown more confirmed in his impression that there was over-hanging us a special blessing from the Lord. His interest in Rose and Willy undoubtedly deepened his solicitude. Favorable indications in the one and increasing waywardness on the part of the other, would naturally stir his heart very tenderly. But his anxiety did not stop with these. It reached out and embraced the entire community. He could not help asking large blessings. There was no loud display of zeal, for that would not have been Allen Anson. You would feel the magnetism of it in his public prayers and when he presided in the Sunday-school. Ready to welcome any movement which looked in the one direction, he had been prompt to begin attendance upon the meetings in The Grove. The professed design of cultivating a higher type of piety, had fallen in with his aspirations for a purer and holier life. But there was no taint of fanaticism in his zeal. The pretentions of the leaders were not pleasant to him, and he quietly dropped away from their meetings back to the humility and lowliness of his daily Christian walk. He had no confidence in a perfection suddenly attainable. Like his devout father and like all of God's better servants before him, his whole

life was a Pauline reaching forth unto those things which are before, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

During these months, Anson's conversation became more richly savored of the Gospel. Afterward I was led to remember very distinctly the day spent with his family at the parsonage, and the faith of the man even then. I am confident that none of us were up with him at that time. Like Martha, he had left us behind and gone on out to meet the Promiser. The grace of God undoubtedly brings His praying children to the front in anticipation of His coming. Were we wise to understand their language, the shining faces of these favored men and women, their awakened fervor, their stronger faith, their green flourishing graces, are saying to each one of us from their advanced position—The Master is come and calleth for thee. It must be very blessed to be among those who always see Him first!

Without a hint to others, Allen and Lydia devoted a certain evening of the week to special supplications for a refreshing from on high. Our Wednesday prayer-meetings were well attended and sweetly solemn. I continued to hear that our young people were sustaining their services well and with a growing attendance from among the unconverted. All this was a wholesome indication of life. But these two believing souls passed on ahead. The promise was to two who should

agree, and they agreed to devote an hour every Monday night in asking for God's blessing upon the word preached the day before, and in pleading directly for the salvation of souls. While the world was waging its war upon the Sabbath impressions and trying to choke them with its cares, here every week were these faithful ones bowed before the throne interceding for the safety of the seed. Unseen by any but God and the angels, this Christian home was propping the pulpit with a living power. On the day when the pastor was wearied and worn from his enervating labors, the blue Mondays of jaded exhaustion, the work was taken up by these earnest helpers, and pressed before the Mercy Seat. This was the way for true holiness to grow.

I pause to note again how very beautiful it is when husband and wife are so truly one in Christian sympathy and in the service of the Redeemer. Both in the same church, both of the same faith, both reared under the same sacred traditions, both shaded by the same vine and fig tree, the twain had indeed become one in all the supreme interests of time and eternity. The hope of each soul is an echoed amen to the hope of the other. The disposition to usefulness burns as a joint-flame in the bosom of both—each enkindling the other. Happy the pastor who has such homes to uphold his hands.

The Savior did not long stay away from those hallowed scenes. He never does. And as He

revealed Himself more and more, the yearnings of Allen and Lydia deepened toward their fellow Christians as well as toward the impenitent. They talked abroad more and more of Jesus. But there was no ostentation; there was no boasting of their own attainments. They seemed to have passed out of self and to be thinking of the Savior instead. These are the landmarks along the pathway to holiness.

While conversing among the neighbors, Lydia found that Mrs. Valey was fully in sympathy with her own feelings, and she invited her to be with them the next Monday night. God was with the three. A new purpose was thereby suggested. It was proposed to talk with others carefully and bring to their circle such as might be found fully of the same mind and hope. Just enough secrecy was to be maintained to guard themselves from useless speculations through the community, to prevent any diversion from the customary worship at the church, and to protect their secluded devotions from being chilled by the curious and cold. Even Rose and Willy, although in the house, were not solicited to attend. There was no haste in introducing new parties to the little group. They were possessed with a common desire to follow the leadings of the Spirit and not to take one step in advance of His divine guidance.

The history of this circle came to me in the months following. What I am describing in one chapter took shape very gradually and as an un-

dertone away below the other events of my story. There was no surface agitation. To my surprise, I learned afterward that Mother Howe was one of the earliest to attend their modest meetings, giving pleasant impulse by her readiness in the phrases of heaven. Mr. May also was soon numbered among them. Of the younger people, Richard Phales had ere long prayed his way near to the throne and thereby into their fellowship. But I feel that I am almost committing a wrong in recording their names. I will not any further. It were more fit that they should remain unheralded upon my page as they remained unnoted by public eye or ear through those still days. It never occurred to them that they were doing any great thing. They withdrew from the gaze of men, that none might hear but God. There was little talk in their meetings—little of anything but prayer. When the hour was out, they shook hands and parted. And as regularly and quietly as the return of the blood to their hearts, they came together again on the following Monday night.

Was there any thought that they were better than others? In wide contrast with this, they were passing through deep humiliation of soul for short-comings in duty, mourning their intense unworthiness, and pleading that the blood of immortal souls might not rest upon their skirts. The best of Christians occasionally pass through these deepest of waters. Some among that little band were lamenting their sins as never before. They

saw their imperfections and wore no cloak before the altars of God. The thought of superior attainments never trailed its way across their minds. As their only source of comfort, they were clinging to a present Savior.

The burden of their prayer was for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, and a thorough spiritual awakening which should embrace both themselves and others. As time passed on, there grew upon them an insuppressible crying of soul for the salvation of unbelievers. And not merely for these generally, but for individuals. Each of the circle suggested the names that bore heaviest upon their hearts, and they agreed to make them the special subjects of their intercessions. Unknown to the persons themselves, these names were continually taken up to the ear of God. Perhaps we are all indebted far more than we dream, to intercessions like these.

Silently the numbers grew, until the room was full. No one had as yet informed the ministers about these meetings. They thought that the ministers had enough of care on them in the regular services. But the preachers felt constantly strengthened without knowing the source of their help. When stayed and upheld by such influences, the preaching becomes easy and sweet. We know that somebody is praying. Weston's sermons took more and more the direction of their hopes, for God was guiding both. He in his study and in the pulpit, and they in their retired worship

were unconsciously preparing, and being prepared, for the same glorious scenes.

Yes, and before those glorious scenes should appear, they were both being prepared to meet great obstacles which were yet to interpose.

My old housekeeper was talking very mysteriously through those days. "Nymphas and the church which is in his house, Colossians four and fifteenth; Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in their midst and said: 'Peace be unto you,' John twenty and twenty-sixth; These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus and with His brethren, Acts first and fourteenth."

Nancy Smith still had her troubles. Catherine May was going to die, and there would be nobody on all the face of the earth for the young pastor to marry. Jeremiah Fluke was sure to split the church. Some of her fellow-members were so slack in their religious duties. There had been no accessions to our communion since Weston came. The unconverted seemed to grow more careless and hardened. But away beneath the surface and below the reach of Nancy's complaints, that circle kept on praying and their numbers increased. And somehow a feeling of expectancy began to settle upon us all.

CHAPTER XVII.

ANOTHER MISSIONARY.

Beware.—*Matthew vii : 15.*

IN our retired neighborhood, we rather enjoyed the thought of living apart from the whirl and clash of the noisy world. It was pleasant to feel ourselves a constituent element of a great Church ; and yet it was also pleasant to feel that our obscurity exempted us from many of the distractions incident to centres of ecclesiastical influence. Many of the great questions of the day passed us by without exciting more than a transient ripple. We did not envy those whose prominence put them in the front of the conflict and exposed them to the mightier onsets of the foe.

But it is not worth while for any of God's militant host to expect entire security from the heresies that march abroad. We may prefer the quiet, and deprecate the war. Some of our churches may be inclined to hush the warnings of the watchmen, decline the struggle, and enjoy their own selfish prosperity in peace. They see no reason why they should be disturbed by these

general interests. But first, or last, the questions which agitate the Church at large, react upon the individual churches, and meet us at points we had not suspected. The general and the particular interest are one. Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. Every little organization touches somewhere the great circumference. We need not hope to escape the common danger. It will hunt us out, however modestly and religiously we withdraw from the conflict and try to hide ourselves beside our private altars.

A man of the name of Darby Plym had been conducting union meetings in a neighboring town. At their close, without solicitation on our part, he came to us, proposing to preach for us on Sabbath and protract the services during the week. Through mutual acquaintances in town, he had secured entrance to certain houses in the parish before he came to Weston or myself. We thought of this afterward. To these members he spoke enthusiastically of revivals now in progress through the land, told of many stirring scenes in which he had taken part, and avowed his confidence that the same blessings were in store for us. There was no little magnetism in his zeal, and some of our people had caught the infection before the Session were consulted in reference to the meeting. Then he came to us backed by the admiration of these earnest Christians and by their desire for scenes similar to those he had portrayed.

It is either fortunate or unfortunate for a rapid age that there should be any old fogies like myself hanging upon its skirts. It is rather hard for us old folks to be jostled out of sacred beliefs and confirmed habits and prayerful expectations. I had been enjoying the stated ordinances with increasing zest. I saw that our young pastor was growing in power, and that his evangelical themes were winning upon the people. I had felt that he was laying a solid basis, sound and deep, for promising developments in the not distant future. Seed was planted which, we might well hope, would germinate ere long for beautiful harvests. I had no doubt of it. There was unfaithfulness here and there in the church, and occasional ebullition of evil among us, but these things did not discourage me. They looked very much like the restlessness of the great adversary under dread of a forward movement upon his kingdom. Altogether I was pleased with the outlook. There was a safe tendency onward. The church was expecting good. And I confidently believed that God was going to use His chosen pastor for the salvation of souls. I saw no necessity for any extraordinary instrumentality from abroad.

It would moreover have been satisfactory to me to have known something more definite about Darby Plym. He claimed to represent no sect. He came to us simply as one of the working brethren—whatever that might mean. He said nothing about credentials. He was silent as to

the indorsement of any Church. He talked much of the great lay movement of the day, and of the clear manifestation of God's approval upon it. Under this agency the cause of Christ was gaining its widest conquests. It was evident that Plym was an Englishman, but he did not tell us so. What the newspapers said, and what he himself told us of his work were expected to secure him entrance into every pulpit.

Three things obtained for him the favorable consideration of our Session. I mention them categorically, to show what slight and trivial influences are sometimes permitted to decide matters of great importance. First—He had passed to an acquaintanceship in our community from a transient acquaintanceship in the town, although the latter acquaintances knew no more of his antecedents than we did. Thus a man is often taken upon trust from point to point, until he seems to have no lack of indorsers. In the second place, he was recommended as an Evangelist to the people of the State by a leading minister of our denomination in one of the cities, without the statement of any more facts than we already knew. There were some of us fully aware that this prominent minister was careless in his recommendations, and that he would be rather pleased to have his own name and sanction taken in place of Church authority. The third reason helping to gain the consent of the Session, was the apparent zeal of the man himself. True, we had lately

lesson upon this point in The Grove. Irresponsible ardor is often a dangerous ally, but we have to learn that fact sometimes from sad experience. Zeal for narrow tenets always assumes the garb of zeal for the Master. If a preacher is in error, the greater his fervor of soul, the greater perhaps his power for evil. A church should always know a man's creed, before accepting him upon his zeal.

Our congregation was in a condition to listen to any vehement speaker. It was not only unnecessary but positively perilous to introduce a new man to the pulpit at this juncture. The state of mind existing was such as to be easily directed to good or to evil. But I said nothing. The thoughts I have been expressing came upon me more distinctly afterward than at first. However it was my feeling all the time that I would rather Darby Plym had waited until we sought him; but now that he was here and could not be refused the pulpit without public discussion of the reasons, I thought it better to yield my own preference in silence. Whether designed I know not, but such men often place churches in this unfair dilemma: We must either give them countenance or appear to the uninitiated intolerant and uncharitable.

I thought too that I could trust my colleague. Unable myself to attend many of the meetings, Weston would be there and would be a safeguard upon the services. No error would remain long undetected, and there would be no lack of bravery in exposing it. Weston withheld his opinion, sub-

mitting the whole matter to the rest of us. I think he felt some delicacy in objecting, lest it might be thought that he was prompted by selfish motives, and was jealous of having a stranger preferred in his place. So we all put it in the hands of the Lord and hoped it would result for the best. But when the bright Sabbath dawned and I saw the large congregation assembling, I would have felt far more comfortable if Weston had been going to occupy the pulpit himself.

I want to do justice by Darby Plym. It is not in my heart to disparage unduly the cause he represented. But I wish he had come to us dressed in his true colors. I wish that from the beginning he had acted with the candor and frankness due from Christian to Christian. It would have been better for him and for us and for our common Christianity. Perhaps he thought it the only way in which he could secure a hearing. I cannot help it. There ought to be nothing sinister and underhand in the Gospel vineyard. An honest faith should be willing to face the light and to challenge scrutiny. I wish that Darby Plym had come that way. He ought not to have sought us disguised. If he was only a layman, he ought to have told us so. If opposed to our system, he ought not to have been content to use the cover of what he considered a false system as an introduction to our people. My mind is so clear upon these points of ethics, that I find my feelings too much taken up with this view of the case to tell my story without anticipating.

In many respects Darby Plym was a remarkable man. His acquaintance with King James' version of the Scriptures, impressed every one as extraordinary. He had evidently studied long and carefully. Usually a small Bible was held in one hand, while with the other he readily turned to any passage referred to in the elucidation of his subject. There was something very attractive in the ease with which he sustained his points from the Word of God. A good understanding was thus established between the audience and himself which won rapidly upon their confidence. Upon the common doctrines of grace he seemed thoroughly sound. He was familiar with the Gospel scheme of redemption and was gifted in his way of telling it.

A rare fluency in the every-day language of the people, terse, idiomatic, picturesque at times from its very simplicity, gave him power to put the truth in wonderfully fresh and striking forms. His discourses abounded in illustration and anecdote. He told many incidents from his past labors and told them well. He understood our human nature, and this knowledge was cleverly used in getting very close to the common channels of thought and feeling. An absence of everything like professional stiffness, helped greatly in removing all barriers between speaker and hearer. He talked from a common level. An interflow of sympathy was secured and maintained between the pulpit and the pews. His heart was apparent through

all he said and did. You felt that he loved the Savior and all for whom the Savior died. Without any attempt at oratory, he produced all the effects of genuine eloquence.

I am aware that in this portrait I have been describing a high order of preaching. It is to be regretted that it is not more generally cultivated. Expositions of Scripture in the prevalent popular diction, causing the Bible to explain itself, and concentrating its unvarnished truths upon heart and conscience, should be kept prominent in all our training and practice. There is no reason why the uneducated should excel us in this. Some of the most learned of our ordained ministry have been the most skilful in popularizing truth. If our preachers would retain their hold upon the masses and avoid unfavorable contrasts with ignorance, they must pay attention to these things. The Church should not be slow to learn lessons of wisdom even from the abnormal religious movements of disjointed times. Weston observed with great interest the speaker's ingenious method of enlisting the attention of his hearers to the doctrines of the cross.

The people were pleased. The congregations increased. The sermons were much discussed through the neighborhood. Many of our best members were delighted. Mother Howe came home every night telling of the gospel feasts. Anson began to hope that the expected out-pouring of the Spirit was immediately at hand. The

Monday evening circle had been intermitted in favor of the public services. The young folks' meetings were postponed. The minds of all were borne along in the one channel. The young pastor assured me that the preaching was orthodox. And I began to question myself if in mind I had not done Darby Plym a wrong, and if my strict old notions were sufficiently pliable under the restless transformations of these later generations. Was it true that a little more liberalism might do us all good, and that the Church of God would do well to let down her rigid standards and open her doors to all who assert love for the same Master ?

CHAPTER XVIII.

DARBY PLYM.

The Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.—*1 Timothy iii: 15.*

EXCEPT in answer to questions as to orthodoxy, Weston was still non-committal. But I saw that he was visiting more than usual among his people.

If Darby Plym had ulterior designs, he was a very prudent man. The only difference noticed as yet between his ministrations and our ordinary services, was a gradual departure from the customary order of exercises—prayer, singing, or sermon being introduced at unexpected points in the worship; a change not altogether agreeable to some, but in the opinion of others giving a new life to the devotions and far preferable to the old forms. It would have been uncharitable to suspect that this was done with any far-sighted purpose to loosen the hold of the old customs upon the minds of the people. Perhaps it would have been more proper for the Evangelist to have consulted the pastor before introducing

these changes, and in all such matters to have publicly recognized him as a ruler in the church. But these were small matters and perhaps not worthy of mention.

Some observing person remembered that, on more than one occasion, he exhorted the people to be their own teachers in the Scriptures and not to submit their consciences to any human authority. If he meant merely to enjoin individual responsibility, surely no one had any right to take exception to his frequent warnings against subjection to priestly domination. All such expressions were capable of the most unexceptionable interpretation. His occasional flings at uninspired commentaries and man-made expounders of the Word, might mean much or little. Some thinking ones reflected that he was himself acting as a commentator for his audience and expecting them to accept his expositions. These, too, may appear little things for me to record. There was so much of precious truth in his preaching, that it would have been considered hypercritical for any one to object to such unimportant matters.

At another time he was preaching from the text in Isaiah, "But ye shall be named the priests of the Lord, men shall call you the ministers of our God." He seemed to warm with his subject. The people were all to be preachers of righteousness. He portrayed the ripe harvest as awaiting a movement of the entire mass of believers. In the late arousing of the laity, Jesus was calling

them emphatically to the front. They had been waiting long enough for the destruction of sin by the ordained ministry. Imposition of human hands could not convey piety or power. All who knew the love of the Savior, were called to tell it. No one was promoted above another. We did not want lords over God's heritage, but a host of faithful, persistent laborers. Anybody who could preach, was commanded to preach. The distinctions of men were unscriptural and baneful. I have condensed Darby Plym's sermon. It contained many excellent injunctions to the lovers of Jesus. He would have them all at work and full of alacrity. He threw out enthusiasm in every word. The world was to be captured by a combined forward movement of God's children everywhere—dropping all sectarian watchwords and trampling down all barriers of order and caste. The sentences and sentiments given above were ingeniously interspersed through a most plausible discourse.

For a night or two there was nothing peculiar in his sermons. He had ventured far enough for awhile, and must again disarm suspicion. Then he drifted into a severe castigation of the churches. Their shortcomings were mercilessly exposed as if he was really taking savage delight in the picture. A dead formalism was cursing the nations. Denominational bigotry had usurped the place of devotion to Christ. All visible organizations had proved a failure. Their tendency was

ever to apostasy, and they were always ready to sacrifice the pure truth to their schemes of partisan aggrandizement. People depended more upon connection with a church than upon the blood of the Redeemer. This drew into their pale a large majority, who having a name to live, were yet dead. Membership with these corrupt bodies was often a hindrance rather than a help to piety.

The utterance of such sentiments from our pulpit at this time was peculiarly unfortunate. One of our most influential citizens had been quieting his conscience for many years behind the imperfections of professing Christians. He had frequently passed under partial awakenings, but had taken no steps because of the inconsistency of those who seemed to stand well in the church. He was exceedingly pleased with the views of the preacher, and was confirmed in his opinion that he was just as good as those who were seen at the communion-table. There was another in the congregation for whom his wife and the church had been long praying, who had contended that a man could be saved as well outside of the church as in it, and who expected to reach heaven more assuredly through the discharge of his moral duties than through the use of any of the appointed means of grace. The poor wife trembled as she listened to these words of Darby Plym. Her husband received them with a complacent smile and came very near to audible applause.

The Marstons and Flukes had soon become regular attendants upon the meetings. Some recognized bond of sympathy seemed to be drawing them together. Jake Askins was also exhibiting no little enjoyment in the services. As usual he had early sought the new preacher and insisted upon having him at his house. The latter was rapidly becoming acquainted through the parish. There was no difficulty in this. The people were cordially hospitable, and always prompt and kind in entertaining visiting ministers. We thought of it afterward, but not in those first days, that Darby Plym seemed to seek the homes of others rather than of the pastors or elders. I saw little of him indeed. I was not well, and he called upon me very seldom. Weston kept busy in calling from house to house. He grew even more silent about his impressions of the Evangelist.

From various quarters, I began to receive rumors which did not at all please me. The views which he advanced at safe intervals and incidentally in the pulpit, he had been expressing without reserve in places where he thought there was no risk. He approached his new acquaintances very carefully. Some few were found ready to sympathize at once with his bitter anti-denominational designs. Others, not understanding the full import of his tenets, were inclined to favor them because they were the opinions of an earnest and saintly man. He did not hesitate to avow his antagonism to all ecclesiastical order and organization, and to inveigh against any

recognition of the clerical office. Every man had an equal right to administer the ordinances. Our Presbyteries, Synods and General Assemblies were without divine authority and a complicated device for confirming and extending man's power over the conscience. The true and only Church of God consisted of those who believed as Darby Plym did, and of a few chosen ones in all the churches whom the Master loved and would ere long deliver from their bondage.

Perhaps it came to me worse than it was. Perhaps not so bad. I would not do wrong by this enthusiast. I suppose he was honest in his creed. He preached a great deal of blessed truth. But he was not ingenuous toward us. He was not justified in trying to undermine the polity of a church while attempting to work under its auspices. It must require an immense amount of bad ethics, or of fanaticism, to make a man think he is doing God's service in the use of such insidious methods of destroying those whose confidence he invites. If you disapprove the government and doctrines of a Church, you ought to abjure all complicity with it and fight it like a man. There is something very mean in the guest who would pull down about the ears of the unsuspecting host, the walls of the very house where he has found food and shelter and trust.

It is not always pleasant to be old. There are times when we long again for the strong arm and the van of conflict. It is hard to see God's Church,

the grand old Church, suffering from her foes and to be able to draw no weapon in her defence. Our weakness pains us then. But never mind. Her King can bring defenders. The climax was hastening faster than I knew. Darby Plym had found sympathizers and was waxing bold. He had been adroitly laboring to work up a public sentiment outside of the pulpit, which would mount to the surface and sustain him in time of need. Another Sabbath had come. He was invited to address the Sunday-school. He ventured even there to unmask some of his views, although they were considerably diluted. There were persons present who could hardly hear it through. The movement upon the Church's children touched the friends of Zion to the quick. Lardner was acting as superintendent that day and, in closing, read the one hundred and thirty-seventh Psalm. In a few expository words, he spoke of the inspired author's love for the Church, an attachment so endearing that he preferred her above his chief earthly joy. The elder painted her as a fond mother to her baptized children, ready to take them in her arms and bear them upon her faith to the bosom of Jesus. The picture had been graphically drawn by an earnest hand. I saw that the conflict was joined. The storm was almost ready to burst.

A large audience gathered,—the house was full. Darby Plym was at his best. Most of the sermon was evangelical and impressive. He felt that he had the audience with him. He presumed upon

it. Perhaps our elder that morning had vexed him. I do not know. I suppose he believed it a safe hour to strike. Suddenly he pronounced all ecclesiastical organizations a gigantic fraud and their ordinations a farce. True, the Psalmist had loved Zion, but his lauded Zion and her corrupt hierarchy had been cast off; so the entire visible Christian Church had so far lapsed from truth and piety that like Israel of old they too had been "corporately rejected of God." This was the Babylon of the Scriptures. All these various denominations, with their parade of law, power, officers, and discipline, were going to the devil!

It will never be known how much further Darby Plym meant to go. He had evidently made a mistake. It would have been more sagacious, and more in keeping with the policy of his abettors, to plant the seed and quietly retire from the field. But he had grown confident and was naturally a brave man. I think, however, that he had miscalculated. God often discomfits an error by its own rashness. A firm old figure, crowned with rugged head of gray, arose from one of the central pews. Calmly and deliberately, it straightened itself to its full height. It was the same plain veteran who won the race from the young people some months ago in the woods; and the young people were going to be on his side to-day. Not unfrequently in her history has the Church of the Lamb found her staunchest champions in such as he. The old fashioned home-spun did not detract from his

dignity. During the intense stillness and expectancy —for the speaker had wisely paused as the elder arose—old John Phales looked him full in the face and said :

"I call Darby Plym to order. He forgets the place wherein he stands. His strong mind wanders. He must babble no more to-day. There is a government in this church, God given, and it is going to assert itself and end this outrage. I do not understand it, sir. You came into this community and sought our good-will. You have been preaching under our sanction. You have returned evil for good. You have gone back upon all the claims of Christian courtesy and Christian confidence. Your outstretched friendly hand carries a dagger. You have told some glorious Gospel truths, but, hid away behind them, you have been smuggling pernicious poison. You have been a zealous, pious, devout talker, but no less a cheat. We cannot afford to be spiritually swindled any further. The Savior loved His Church and gave Himself for it. The immortal good of these children whose young hearts you would set against their mother, enjoins you to silence. The hopes of the aged, here taught to soar away and anchor themselves within the veil and now speaking through my own cracked voice, command you to silence. The dead lips of the sleepers over the brook, who once sung God's praises amid His orderly worship here and got well in readiness for singing them in glory, cry out now from their

graves, and bid you be silent. I cannot comprehend the honesty of it. You get inside of a church to stab a church. Come down from that pulpit, Darby Plym. Take the Book, Calvin Weston, and tell us of the everlasting promises!"

The crusader had struck upon a rock. It was a sharp remedy. The kingdom of God never lacks decisive blows in her time of need. Darby Plym obeyed. He went out of the doors never to enter them again. I suppose he has been able to talk of the tyranny of church officials and the intolerance of the sects more feelingly than ever before. Fellow Christians, who defeat our petty schemes and selfish hobbies, are always God-forsaken and on their way to ruin.

Weston was equal to the sudden emergency. In silence he had been acquainting himself with all that the Evangelist had been doing and saying through the community. He had learned also of antecedent plans abroad among the enemies of the churches, for sapping their influence and alienating their membership and resolving them into one great anarchy.

Facts were secured with regard to the sending out of agents on these clandestine missions, and also in reference to secret sympathy with the movement on the part of persons still in the churches. Weston was thus ready to explain both the principles and the measures of those with whom Darby Plym was co-operating. My colleague had not spoken sooner, because he was awaiting infor-

mation which could not be controverted. Now he was fully prepared to expose their peculiarities and disprove their positions from the Scriptures. Our thinking people were satisfied. Weston was careful to sift the chaff from the wheat and heartily indorse all that was best in the preaching of the week. Then he followed up the thought of John Phales and showed how Christ had so built His Church that the gates of hell should not prevail against it. Jesus Himself was a member of the Church. There is a proper Church-love, for, to love what He loved, must be both right and salutary. He urged the people to go quietly forward in the performance of every duty to each other and to Him who raised His Son from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places, and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to His Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.

The storm passed away without any great damage. Of course there were some who were not slow to condemn the Church and advocate the cause of her foes. There is never an assault, however weak and indefensible, upon the sacred and venerable beliefs of the ages, but somebody will be found to re-iterate the charge and glorify the assailant. A few contended that Darby Plym had been badly treated. He was a good man and told wholesome truths. Free speech was the right of all. The people over in the vicinity of the school-

house were elated. Jake Askins was assiduous in agitation. Exaggerated reports of conversations began to be set afloat. Jake sought Weston. He had long been secretly disliking the young pastor because of his failure to rule him. Now he thought it a favorable time to strike. He impeached his honor by various insulting insinuations and even accused him of many wilful misrepresentations.

Weston endured it all without the tremor of a nerve and even condescended to reason calmly with the man. They were sitting side by side in the shade. Suddenly the foolish man dared to quote Catherine May, spoke with a taunt of her relations with the pastor, and pronounced some assertion of hers a falsehood. The word was no sooner uttered than the young man was on his feet with his cane raised over the slanderer. Perhaps it was wrong. He had determined to keep cool and had borne on nobly. Perhaps he ought to have borne it all. And yet there are times—but no, I will not defend the act. I did not start out to paint Weston a perfect character. Ministers are but men. Weston himself condemned it. I am glad the cane did not descend. I am glad that Askins was so prompt in retracting the charge and pleading the young man's forgiveness for all that had been said. He ought to have known there was something beneath Weston's exterior which it would be rash to provoke too far. It may be that it was the only way to deal effectually with a man like Jake Askins. Still I do not defend my

boy. Perhaps a minister ought to bear everything that people see fit to put upon him.

Jake made utmost professions of good will to the pastor before they parted ; but the humiliation had been too deep. His pretentions to superior holiness were wounded by the faithful counsels administered beneath that tree. He and his few friends gathered at the school-house, and Darby Plym was with them. A community, as they called it, was formed of all devout sympathizers. That ineffable, cadaverous smile again settled upon the features of Jeremiah Fluke. The malcontents were advised to remain for the time in connection with the church in order to maintain and if possible extend the influence of their principles among its members. On what doctrine of right such a course was defended, it did not appear.

Of course there were resolutions. Paper resolutions are the safety-valve of all bewildered zeal, of all aimless enthusiasm, of all religious sensationalism, of all smouldering indignation. They are the wind-guns of powderless batteries. People without positive creeds and fixed principles, are often the most prolific in these cheap substitutes. And accordingly this "community" ventilated itself in the following :

"Be it solemnly enacted in the cause of righteousness and in the fear of God that the ancient Gray-stone church has apostatized from the truth and is a daughter of the mystic Babylon ; That its existence is a flagrant schism ; That its ordained

ministry is an intolerable burden and a sin; That lay-preachers are a divine institution; That all conflict with these pronunciamentos will be heresy and blasphemy; and, That the course of the said Gray-stone church is treason to God and to us, the only true and holy people of God."

Such deliverances always abound with adjectives. They were adopted with great enthusiasm, especially the adjectives. The worship that day was loud and long. Fluke and Askins administered the Lord's Supper, and the meeting closed with Darby Plym's apostolic benediction. Amid the tears of the brethren, the lay-preacher went forth upon his mission to other benighted regions.

The neighborhood returned to its accustomed quiet. Weston preached more earnestly than ever. The praying circle resumed its sweet reunions at Elder Anson's, and plead with the Master that no harm might result to His kingdom. The Lord came near, and the still small voice was heard. God was with His people.

"Unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, Amen—Ephesians third and twenty-third"—was the daily doxology of Mother Howe.

CHAPTER XIX.

ROSE AND WILLY.

Even the youths shall faint and be weary.—*The Poet Isaiah.*

"BUT things cannot remain as they are. I am getting old enough to support us both. If you would only trust me, this community should not be looking down upon us much longer as upon foundlings and inferiors!"

"And yet, brother, what good friends God has given us. I wish you could be as happy as I can in the kindness that is all about us. With warm hearts on every side, it seems to me that I can forget trouble. Why care for a little hate, while we have enough of love?"

"You are always talking of love, Rose. Where is any love that you and I can count upon as safe and and lasting and true?"

"First of all, we two love each other as dearly as brother and sister can. I am glad every day that we are twins. Our mother's smile fell upon us both at once, and we want to live as if that smile were upon us all the time. It is sweet to be

twins. If I could only see you contented and happy, I would care for no other joy. Our hearts began to beat together, and we *do* love each other, Willy!"

They were sitting with arms interlocked, and leaning side by side.

"I will not deny that, my little bewitching rosebud."

It did her so much good to see him smile.

"And then," she continued, "we must never call in question the untiring devotion of Uncle Allen and Aunt Lydia. I have wondered how they could have treated their own children more affectionately and tenderly, even if little Ansons had been growing up in their home. We shall never love them enough."

"Yes, but they *act* our parents; we *act* their children. Sometimes I wish that for awhile they could be stern and harsh."

"No, brother, real love cannot be feigned. True, we are orphans; but those two honest transparent souls are offering us the shelter and rest of a great abiding endearment. There was love all over their good faces this morning as they looked upon your troubled countenance. They keep company too much with their Savior to know anything of pretense and deceit."

The girl was talking almost as if she were herself a Christian. How certain hearts would have gladdened, if it had indeed been so!

"It galls me to the quick not to know who my parents were. It is bad enough to be orphans,

without having this hideous uncertainty hanging all about it and haunting us."

There was where the sharp thorn rankled. Was there no possibility of the uncertainty ever being removed? Perhaps it would only have wounded him more.

"Yes, we are orphans," she said. She was speaking very gently and low. "Sometimes I would give worlds for one remembered look of our mother. That one look would have been enough until I should meet her in heaven."

Then she expected at death to be taken to her mother's side in heaven. But who does not expect that?

"How I envy those children," she continued, "who have seen their mothers' loving faces! How beautiful and sweet the precious features must seem to them! I wish I knew what kind of eyes our mother had. And then her mouth and cheeks, our mother's soft cheeks; her brow and hair, the wavy, sunshiny locks we would have played with; the places here and there where the smiles started and dimpled; and then the holy expression overhanging all, the indescribable mother-look; oh that we but had it all pictured upon our hearts! I have seemed to see the dear face in my dreams. I know it was a sweet face, Willy. I know it was pure and good. This is the reason God is keeping us among such good people still. If our mother had chosen for us, she would have chosen just as God has, and entrusted us to the pious Anson home."

The girl was recognizing the kind guardianship of her Maker all the while.

"And I am sure she would have given us our old pastor's paternal ways, and Catherine's fond friendship, and Mr. Weston's brotherly regard and—"

"Do you know, Rose, that I don't like the way the young preacher looks at you and seems to watch you and studies your every act? He don't know it can be seen, but I see it all the time. There is a different look comes over him at such moments. I believe his mind is poisoned against you. He looks to me as if he were hardening himself against you. I could not endure him, if I found he was harboring the common prejudice against us, and disliking you."

There was a little flitting shadow of pain, but she put it quickly away.

"No," she said, "that is not it. He wants us both to be Christians. He sees that I am perverse and wicked, and refuse to love His Savior. It grieves him and makes him sad, and he is disappointed and distressed. We have no idea, I suppose, how hard it is for a good pastor to wait and wait, and see nothing but impenitence on the part of his young people. I have observed Mr. Weston very near weeping, at times."

"But, Rose, you are not wicked."

"We are all very wicked while we refuse to trust in Jesus and to think more of Him than everything else and to love Him dearly."

She knew more of the truth than thousands whom the world counts wise. There was silence for some moments, and then she said:

"Mr. Weston is our friend. I want you to feel that way towards him, brother. He, too, is an orphan. He has his lonely hours, and knows what it is to be fatherless and motherless. I have heard him describe his mother's beautiful face until I fancied she looked like an angel. We think so much of ministers officially, staid and sober in their high vocation, that we almost forget they are men and have their own tender human hours. I can listen to Mr. Weston's sermons better, because he is an orphan and has told me about his mother. She must have been very good and lovable. I almost loved her too. And I longed all the more to know how our own dear mother looked."

"Your own face is growing more and more like hers every day!"

They both started suddenly. The unknown voice came hoarsely over the hedge near which they had been sitting in the starlight. They looked at each other in blank astonishment, and for a moment scarcely moved. Then Willy dashed around by the gate and to the point whence the sounds seemed to proceed. But the delay had been sufficient for the man, whoever he was, to have time for eluding his search.

The hour of pleasant companionship had been darkened. Poor Willy! He had been unhappy all day; and his sister had brought him here to soothe

and cheer. For she alone could quiet his heart in its seasons of bitterness. To-night he had appeared especially tractable and yielding; and how happy her heart had been! Hers was indeed a twin life!

The lad came back to his sister excited and fierce. We see how sensitive and unreasonable he had become. The interruption might mean little or nothing; perhaps some chance passer-by who had nothing better to do than to surprise and startle the unsuspecting children. Rose reasoned with her brother, and urged that it was needless to make a mystery of so small a matter and to let the moment's fright worry them. The lad was determined to find in it fresh food for his morbid suspicions and new caustic to his sore pride. There was a conspiracy against them; somebody desired their ruin; they were constantly watched. He was more firmly resolved than ever to leave the neighborhood and seek a home elsewhere. The love of his kind friends weighed nothing with him. Rose was all that he cared for, and he wanted her with him away from the scenes of this great trouble.

"Your own face is growing more like hers every day."

Notwithstanding her plea that it meant nothing, Rose stood before her mirror that night examining every feature and studying every expression. The young girl was very beautiful in her rounding youthfulness, but had never made the dangerous

discovery. And now she cared not for what the glass showed her of her own personal charms—not at least for their own sake—but only as they might interpret the beauty of another. "Like hers!" Where was the impress that came from her dead mother's face? On what feature had the dear maternal look stamped itself and lived when she had forever gone? A longing intensity was in the gaze which questioned the mirror through. Was the color of their eyes the same? Were her mother's lips shaped like these? Oh, that she could catch a glimpse of the likeness and dream it into life to-night! She knew it was a far sweeter face than this. At least, the mother-look was there, as it could never be in this. More earnestly than inspired painter ever studied some rare model to fashion into beauty the glorious ideal which brightens in his mind, eagerly did the young orphan watch her own image for a hint of the sweet being who once gazed in love upon the little twins.

And then she turned away still hungering; and thought how foolish she was to let the unknown voice affect her so; and prepared for bed, thinking of brother, and saddening with his sadness. Before her room was darkened for the night, she knelt and prayed. Unknown to Anson and Lydia, there in the still chamber not far above their heads, their adopted daughter was praying. They knew something of their children's trouble, but they had taken it all to God and left it there, and believed it would come out right. And now not far from

them, and not far, we hope, from the bosom of the Master, draped in her white night-robes and bowed amid the snowy folds, the fair young supplicant was kneeling between the hearts of her foster-parents and the heavens.

I wish that Weston could have known of the picture as there she plead in her loveliness. He was needing something to cheer him; he was yearning to the young. No soul, as yet, in this community had been given him for his hire. That little room enclosed a scene which would have awakened his life to transports of joy and thanksgiving. Ah, yes; in hours when the faithful pastor knows it not, waiting anxiously, hoping on, there may be thoughtful souls, hid away from every eye but the eye of God, leaning quietly to their immortality and breathing low petitions to the ear of Him we serve. If we long and labor for good, we need not be discouraged. God will hasten it in His time. Meanwhile we must be willing to walk by faith and not by sight.

A few days after, the following ill-natured letter came into the hands of the orphans. It reached Willy first, or he would never have seen it. In rage he brought it to his sister:

"Your game is about up. There are a good many of us who know all about your claims to good society. The young man needn't hold his head so high and go strutting around the country as if he were a gentleman. And Catherine May may strive to keep the girl respectable, and sacrifice

her own standing in order to bolster her up, but it will not serve much longer. It is a shame for you to impose yourselves on the Ansons and get them to love you, only for them in the end to have their hearts lacerated and be disgraced. One who knows what it is all coming to, advises you both to take time by the foretop and get away to parts unknown, and save yourselves and your friends from the storm which is beginning to thunder. A word to the wise is sufficient. A FRIEND."

It was a malignant deed. While the young girl was leaning to the right and taking God's name prayerfully upon her lips, an emissary of hell was at work to drive her good impressions away and replace them with venom. She was forced again to see her brother driven almost wild with the new insult. She knew that all this was injuring the boy and might result in his ruin. It is sad for a soul to pass through these storms of indignation at so early an age. In this way the future oak is wrenched and gnarled. It was hard for the poor girl to think of the wrong which might distort and blur the symmetrical growth which her sisterly heart had idealized and become happy in the romantic anticipations of good. The dreams of young sisters make heroes and demigods of their growing brothers. A blight of the hope is a blight of the heart in many true bosoms at home.

"I will go with you anywhere that may be best. We will not decide abruptly. Let us wait awhile

and see if there may not be some good issue from this trouble. We should be willing to suffer awhile ourselves before we hurry sorrow upon others. But be sure when the time comes, Willy, I will give up all others for my twin brother."

Although they had entered upon life the same hour, the girl was older than the storm-tossed boy. The impulses of woman often go on in wisdom far ahead of those of our sex of the same age. And not unseldom they stay ahead. She said again :—

"I thought of going away before you mentioned it, Willy, and I was ready, if the time should come. I did not know but it would be better for the two good souls who were staking so much of their happiness upon you and me. But, may be, we would stab them far deeper, if we went. It would be very mean to let a little trial of our own drive us to wound those who are true to us. We would both of us be willing to bear a great deal rather than do that."

At heart Willy had many noble qualities and she loved to appeal to them. At another time, she said :—

"Uncle Allen has been setting his heart upon a thorough and honorable College course for you. For a long time the nimble fingers of Aunt Lydia have been quietly working to have all the little conveniences in readiness by the time you are prepared to go. We can never know how earnest and rainbow-hued the hopes they have set

upon the successes of their boy, the brilliant career before him, the honor he is to reflect upon them! Yes, I too have felt like getting away; but then again I believe we could bear anything rather than blight the fond expectations of these kind bosoms. And I too have had my own bright visions of the triumphs of my brother in those open fields of learning."

The lad's ambition loved well to listen to his sister's extravagant fancies about his future and the probabilities of greatness within his reach. How soon the dear loving diplomats learn to manage us! It is well for us and the world that they are so often on the side of the right. Again, she said:—

"Were we to steal away, it might be taken as an acknowledgment of something wrong. It might be thought that we knew of some dark stain upon our birth and dared not face the scandal. Sometimes it looks to me a little cowardly to run, and let the stigma rest upon our parents unredressed. Can we do so with self-respect? It might be far more magnanimous to stand by Uncle Allen and Aunt Lydia, and not allow some unworthy, sneaking enemy to drive us from the field with so contemptible a weapon."

Rose was not conscious of any extraordinary ingenuity in all this. She was only endeavoring in mind and heart to think her way to the proper course of action and to help her brother to the right. Some of the wisest things ever done, have

been achieved under impulses like these. In her love for her brother, the inexperienced damsel had been drawing out an argument worthy of the world's skilled advocates. The audience was only one, but that one her brother. The fee was that brother's good. Love has had marvelous skill in such scenes before. At another time, she said :—

"It seems to me sometimes that an auspicious opportunity is afforded us here to make a name and conquer a character. If our lives are pure and spotless and good, we will not be long under shadow. Rectitude will force respect. Some day the people will recognize true merit though parentage be unknown. If we only act upon noble principle and do our duty fully, there would be no question of our being esteemed and honored after awhile. There is something very pleasant in the thought of rising upon our obscurity and mounting gradually and surely up to a position in the regard of the wise and the good. It would be far more creditable than if we had started with the field all clear before us, and the battle already won by those who have gone before."

Was this our little Rose? Again she had passed on in advance of the boy. Love was the inspiration. Perhaps God was preparing her to be a strong help to him and to others in the years to come.

"I am not a man," she continued, "but I feel a charm in the thought of living down this little slur, proving our worth, establishing our good name,

and so in the end defeating the foe upon his own ground. Do you notice, Willy, that for some reason the writer of that letter wants us to leave this community? Perhaps the best way to disappoint and put him to rout, would be to stay here and live stainless and irreproachable lives. Then the years would see us going on up above every sneer and every defamer. I wish we were only what we ought to be to-day. I would then have no fear for the future."

In his unhappy moods, Willy always let his sister talk on. It quieted him and made him feel better. He knew his place in her love, and her calm tones came in very sweetly among the jangling chords of his torn feelings. Girlhood was getting ready for her destiny. If it is needed, woman can talk consolingly, even when she feels deepest. Man is silent, and sometimes powerless.

"I wish, brother, we were only what we ought to be to-day. I wish we were both Christians and both happy in the Church among God's people. Then these little things would disturb us less, and we would be ready to begin our upward living."

His feelings had jangled again. The former bitterness surged up whenever he thought of the Church. Did not the first taunts come from one of its members? He threw from his lips the ungracious words that he would never join any church where such base men were countenanced. No connection was wanted with them. He would rather work his own way to heaven. But he had

no sooner spoken than he saw that his sister was grieved; and he hastened to soften the asperity of his words.

"Never mind, darling rosebud; your brother will not always be so rude. If there is anything worth saving in me, the old preacher and those dear Ansons and my angel sister will win me to the truth, some day. It may come before you think. This big pride of mine bothers me almost to death. I cannot hope to be a Christian while I feel like choking the life out of the author of that note."

This was indeed true: and yet she was encouraged by the tone of what he said. Oh that he could love the Savior and find peace there! But then who was she, still in her sins, to feel that way about him!

A day or two after, Rose was starting home from the Mays'. Catherine was much better, and her young friend was rejoicing in her recovery. But the quick eye of Weston saw a trouble in the young girl's face back of the joy. He left his books and went off with her down the lane.

"I have made you a promise," he said, "and I have kept it. I have prayed for him, Rose. I have tried to win his confidence, and sometimes I believe not in vain. And now I want you to make me a promise in return."

She looked up to his face with new interest. What would the young pastor ask of her?

"I have seen to-day that you are still in trouble

—perhaps more troubled. You once said to me it might be better for Willy and your friends here that you should both go away and leave us all to forget you. Now, Rose, that must not be. Your brother is sore and excitable. You are inclined to do anything to please him. But it must not be."

He argued that it would be a wrong to those who loved them and a wrong to themselves. It was strange how much like her own words to Willy were her pastor's thoughts to-day. They must stay here, he urged, however unpleasant for awhile, and by their established worth melt away the prejudice and win the love of all.

"And now," he said, "I want you to promise me that under no circumstances will you take any such step without first telling me. I have no right to ask it, but will you not make me the promise?"

Had he read her thoughts? It had been upon her mind to-day more than ever before—a dread of what might happen if her brother should discover the author of this new threat, and an impression too that it would be safer to go quietly away to another home. The possibility of the parting had been obtrusively present even amid her gladness at the Mays'. Did he know it? Was Willy right, and had Mr. Weston studied her, until he could read her every purpose?

"I give you my promise," she said. "I will never decide to go, until I have first talked with my pastor and told him all."

In girlish way she reached her hand to him, as if to seal the compact. For a moment it lay in his.

"You shall never regret it," he answered. "But has there been more trouble? Has anything further occurred to alarm?"

She told him all. Her reserve had been broken before and she spoke as freely as to Willy. He heard from her lips of their conversation about her mother's face and the startling interruption by that strange voice. It was very touching to think of her orphanhood as unsustained by the memory of a single feature of the one who bore her. He too found himself searching her face for possible resemblance to the dead mother and wondering if this beauty was inherited. But what had he to do with such thoughts? He put them from him, and wondered if there was any clue in the assertion made by that strange voice. Did the man know the parents of the orphans? Was there any connection between this incident and the surprise in The Gorge and the other unexplained scares of the girl? Was some stranger hanging around the neighborhood and watching Rose for an unknown end? If so, might not the mystery be unraveled and the child saved from needless frights? Why were there two, instead of one, following and seeming to watch himself and the girl some weeks ago? Were these imaginary enigmas, or was there some secret back of it all? He found himself profoundly interested. But was he not their pastor? And was there not danger that these irritating

causes would interfere with the spiritual good of the two young souls? For this reason, ought they not to be protected? He thought of Lardner. Would it not be well to call in the sound judgment of his elder?

And then she went on to tell of the cruel note. She had it with her. Weston read it in silence; for a moment his face grew stern. Notwithstanding the evident disguise of the writing, he was sure that he had seen the hand before. He said nothing to Rose, but he asked that it might remain for awhile in his possession. With her consent he put it carefully away in his pocket. Put it away for a stormy day which was to come sooner than they knew.

CHAPTER XX.

THE PRESBYTERY.

Governments.—*1 Cor. xii: 28.*

MY many years have taught me that the Presbyterian system of doctrine and system of government have only to be understood and observed in their fair outworkings, to meet the admiration of intelligent and candid minds. Ye shall know them by their fruits; do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Upon nations and upon communities they leave an impress of which they have no reason to be ashamed. Conflicting theories may gain the ear for awhile and be temporarily popular, but time and their own extravagances correct the impressions made and leave the field clear again to the true and sound *jure divino* principles of The Book. Their tenacity of life and their power to resist heresy are more than human. It would seem that the Almighty had imparted to them a vital spark of His own immortality; and so they work on, like their own Scriptural tenet of the Sovereign purpose of God, surely and impregnably to the accomplishment of

their great mission. They ask the sober mind. They appeal to the ages.

To me it was gratifying that the meeting of our ecclesiastical court was to follow so soon upon the heels of our little heterodox commotions. More especially so because the ungainly issue had been made upon the question of ordination. It is a mistake to suppose that any great amount of either brains or piety is required to raise a ripple across the course of a long established truth. The weak and unsteady may be impressed with the apparent originality of oft-exploded error; but for us who have witnessed or read of these periodic ephemera until we are tired, it is pleasant to watch the majestic march of God's own plans over every temporary hobby on down toward the final destruction of sin.

My colleague had been licensed to try his gifts, and had met the corroborating testimony of God's people to the internal call of the Spirit. Deeper interest was felt by us all in this meeting of the Presbytery, because he was, upon its approval, to be formally set apart to the Gospel ministry according to Apostolic usage. As for eighteen centuries, so now we were expecting to see God's appointed authority investing our brother under solemn sanctions with an office of which the angels might well be proud. It would be done in the fear of the Lord and regardless of the vagaries of the ordained or unordained. The Church of Christ still had grace enough to know that, at best,

the great Evangelistic lay successes of the day were exceptional and supplied, no argument against the regular and orderly methods of the divine working.

The gathering of the brethren, the answering of face to face, the warm words of greeting, told of an attachment between God's workmen which is beautiful to see. From over large counties they have come, from city and village and hamlet and farm. From various work and different experiences and great responsibilities they meet, to grasp each other's hands and hear each other's sermons and be refreshed by the way. These are God's rulers; holding their commissions from the throne; representatives of God's elect; entrusted with high and holy interests; called by heaven and earth to the administration of an office more exalted in dignity than the worlds proud potentates ever knew. Here the two classes of elders convene as peers, and consult together for the good of the broad vineyard. It was pleasing to see sturdy men, men from the plough and the trades, men of strong common sense and sound judgment which had been learned from immediate contact with their fellows, uniting their pious business minds with the trained graduates of the schools in devising means and methods for the extension of the kingdom. I have never been able to understand how any one entitled to the honor can be willing to stay away from these places of duty and of privilege. After long

attendance upon our ecclesiastical judicatories, I give my testimony that God has manifested His approval upon them in wondrous ways; and that, though fallible and sometimes erring, yet they have shared largely and noticeably in His promised wisdom and mercy. And I bear record that the best preachers and best elders are oftenest there.

We enjoyed with deep interest the opening sermon—a feast always looked forward to with pleasant anticipations. After months of preaching, without hearing from the pulpit any voice but our own, it is a luxury to listen to these first words from a brother whom we love. The good man to-night had come up to us fresh from a pastorate which the Lord had owned to the saving of many souls since last we met. We were glad to hear the tones through which the voice of God had been so certainly sounding. He was a man that would have adorned any profession. From all the calls of ambition, from all the proffers of wealth he had turned away and embraced poverty and obscurity and toil; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. The annals of our race have given few examples of the morally sublime more affecting than the lives of such men spent in humble positions and in self-denial; unseen, unknown and unpraised; doing their quiet, constant work through long months in little churches, poorly paid, their names unsung; and

yet laboring on, praying on, and never wavering. Taken in connection with such a life, the text that night was inspiring—"My grace is sufficient for thee."

The organization of the Presbytery and its elections were effected with dispatch and dignity. Equals among equals, no struggle for precedence, no aspiration to be first, the parity of the Gospel ministry recognized and felt, they quietly called one of their number to preside over their deliberations. No lordly prerogative, no ambitious orders, no gradations of pomp, emerged into notice. The tricks of human pride are manifold and marvelous. There were good and devoted men following the apostolic days, and yet it is sad to reflect that from this simple convenience of a Moderator in representative ecclesiastical bodies, gifted thereby with no titled primacy, gradually arose, under the lead of an unavowed and unsanctified ambition, all that monstrous array of hierarchical dignitaries which has removed so large a part of the Church far from the simplicity of the New Testament age, and which clings even to Protestantism like an incubus.

On the other hand, here were system and unity and authority and the reign of law ; a Bible protest against feeble independency and congregational anarchy ; a real court of jurisdiction having healthful cognizance both of doctrine and of discipline ; and in the faith of God's promised presence and in the name of His believing people,

legislating and adjudicating within constitutional and Scriptural limits, "as it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us."

On reaching home, I overheard the soliloquy of our good old housekeeper. She cared little for the controversies of men while she had access to the Word of God. Their many volumes and their ingenious theories had no weight with her in comparison with the One Book. Her last words to her kitchen and poultry yard and home arrangements, were clearly a lecture on Church government. "And when they had ordained them elders in every church—Acts fourteen and twenty-third." She was undoubtedly recognizing the fact of a plurality of officers, a Session in every organization. "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church; and when they were come to him he said, Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers; Acts twentieth chapter." From her emphasis, it was evident that Mother Howe knew overseers to be the translation of the word for bishops, and that her mind was dwelling upon the fact that God, through His Spirit, had arranged their appointment. Again she quoted: "And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter; fifteenth chapter of Acts." She saw then, as to-day, the representatives of the churches assembled in authoritative council. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially

they that labor in the word and doctrine; First Timothy five and seventeenth." In the injunction of Paul, her unsophisticated mind, looking only for the truth, and willing to embrace it when found, easily discerned the two classes of Presbyters; those that ruled only, and those that both ruled and preached.

The people were very happy in having these guests among them. The more completely their houses were filled, the better they were pleased. Friends gathered from a distance and helped to increase the general interest. To save valuable time, the ladies prepared a repast each noon under the trees near the church, and surfeited God's laborers with good things. The genial companionship of these hours was pleasant to behold and sweet to remember. Friendships grew and hearts warmed. After being identified with a Presbytery for several years, these genial acquaintanceships beyond our own churches, these visits renewed from time to time, this beaming of pleasant smiles from true Christian faces, become in our hearts a valuable possession to cheer us by the way and remind of the heavenly intercourse when the pilgrim days are over. For what sums of gold would we exchange these exquisite attachments scattered far and wide and ready to welcome us ever with kindled fires and loaded tables and white downy beds!

To the people of our parish, I am sure that these bright hours were brighter because of the

presence of our Catherine again with us. We had all been exceedingly anxious about the dear girl ; but the Lord had kept her with us yet awhile, and this was her first appearance in the sanctuary since her recovery. Some of the poison-scars still marked her face, and I thought I saw a subdued sadness there which I had never seen before, and of which I understood not the meaning until the after times. To some of the ministers it had been whispered that this was the probable bride of the young pastor, and, unknown to her, the eyes of our guests were following Catherine with approving interest. During dinner, I saw her fill her hands with choice viands and walk quietly around the hill to intercept a passing horseman. It was Tom Gaines.

Mary Sheldon was again busy among our little ones. From the various family groups, the children seemed to draw to her as toward a beautiful magnet. Why did our clerical brother from Bachelorville seem to manifest such sudden and extraordinary interest in the rising generation? For the time, his shyness appeared to fade away and he seemed to be rapidly developing into the children's favorite preacher. With one of her sparkling laughs, Mary had suggested that the unmarried ministers be assigned to her father's for entertainment ; and this is the result. We will not attempt to prognosticate the effect of this day's proceedings upon the future of Bachelorville church.

In prayerful deliberations about the prosperity of the Gospel cause and in these social joys, the days passed rapidly by. It was good to be there. Of course no small congregation assembled to hear the examination and parts of trial of the candidate for ordination. On these occasions, the Presbytery was always careful and thorough. By their history and by their religious faith, they were sacredly committed to the maintenance of an educated ministry, apt to teach, able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. Their examinations were never a mere form. No diplomas of College or Seminary were permitted to lift from their consciences the Presbyterial duty of testing for themselves the attainments and fitness of the candidate. They knew that a mistake on the part of those who, under God, stand guard at the threshold of the sacred office, is seldom, if ever repaired. The Presbytery felt its solemn accountability to the Master for every licensure and every ordination—every member recognizing the wisdom of our standards in requiring approved piety, mental discipline and liberal culture on the part of those who are to be the authorized interpreters of God's Word and rulers over God's Church. They shrank with awe from sending ignorant, untrained men, illiterate and self-sufficient and rash, to the instruction of those needing knowledge, to the guidance of thinking, reasoning immortals, and to the defence of Christianity against its disciplined foes.

I could not discover that Weston dreaded the ordeal. He was not the man to approach any important juncture unprepared. The solemnity of the occasion seemed to weigh upon him far more powerfully than any anxiety as to the examinations. This was the decisive step, the final act, in his course of consecration. He stood in the presence of the great ceremonial, impressed and reverent. He felt humbled in the thought of his unworthiness of the high office, nor were his convictions equally clear at all times that he was called of God to assume it. There was no reckless presumption, and he awaited calmly the decision of God's court as to his qualifications. These were his near counselors divinely commissioned ; he believed in the promise of the Holy Ghost to teach and guide ; and if it had been their prayerful decision that he had made a mistake and was not yet ready to enter our pulpits, I suppose he would have submitted in all kindness and humility, examined his evidences anew, and applied himself with fresh diligence to further preparation for the great work. In this elevated spirit, spirit both lofty and lowly, he entered upon the hours of close inquisition ; a spirit which neither the skeptic nor the fanatic can ever comprehend. In my own mind, there was no doubt of his call and of the consequent approval of Presbytery. I knew my boy and I was confident as to the result.

As an unaccountable phenomenon of mind, I found myself more attentively observing another than Weston himself. I am sure that every part of the examination only raised the young man higher in the estimation of his parishioners. A deep stillness reigned through the full room, while the searching questions and comprehensive answers were clearly heard by all. His literary, scientific, historical and theological culture was tested at all points. The sound saving doctrines of grace were enunciated distinctly and definitely. The heretical errors of the centuries were marked and repudiated, and the latitudinarian compromises of truth labeled and exposed. Upon the yellow countenance of Jeremiah Fluke, which had condescended to honor the scene, I saw a sardonic smile of contempt. Jake Askins sat with quick anxious look, glancing nervously from the questioners to the questioned, evidently watching eagerly for some mistake and disappointed again and again. Catherine's face showed a composure and seriousness as deep as Weston's own.

But there was in the audience another to whom my thought was drawn irresistibly. I did not know why. You have known the mind to turn strongly in certain directions as if by some spontaneous impulse, and with a pertinacity which you could not explain. In this way my eye passed back constantly to the intent features of Willy Arton. I had not expected him to be present. His sensitiveness so shrank from public places

that he would go only to please his nearest friends. Perhaps it was his curiosity which had brought him to witness the sessions of Presbytery and hear the sermons of strangers. Weston seemed to be winning somewhat upon the good will of the boy, and it may be that a personal regard for the young preacher was eliciting Willy's interest in these exercises. But somehow I felt that my heart was tending forth toward the lad even more warmly than ever before and that for the time he was almost supplanting my colleague in my consideration. I feared that he would notice my watching him, but he was too deeply absorbed. I had never seen so earnest an expression in his face. He had forgotten himself and the clouds were gone. During these hours of riveted attention, the true manliness of the lad seemed to re-assert itself and his better nature to beam through as it had not done for months. I saw something in him which must not be crushed. Were my unaccountable feelings prophecies of good to come? And why did they possess me now?

Called by the same Master, promoted to the same office, it is interesting to note the differences of taste and talent with which the Infinite endows His servants. God takes gracious hold upon natural aptitudes of the mind and appropriates them to the accomplishment of His sovereign purposes in the kingdom. We had our linguistic Presbyter, religiously wed to the Classics, tracing the doctrines of total depravity and of election in

the use and abuse of language, adoring the Logos through all the forms of philology, convinced that the nouns declare the glory of God and the verb showeth His handiwork, listening and praising while Greek idiom unto Greek idiom uttereth speech and Hebrew root unto Hebrew root showeth knowledge. We had our Mr. Josephus Eusebius Hetherington, breathing the airs of Palestine and Piedmont and Scotland, viewing the present and the future through the world's lessons of the past, tracking every specious error of to-day through its hundreds of serpentine evolutions back to its parent heresy, eloquent in the annals of our venerable Church, and hearing the triumphant roll of the wheels of God's chariot through the stately procession of the centuries. We had our Newton Brewster, precise and exact and accurate, addicted to electricity and beetles, at home among the stars or among the trilobites, rivaling Solomon in speaking of trees and of beasts and of fowl and of creeping things and of fishes, seeing the print of God's fingers upon the Zodiac and upon the infusoria, and never happier than when hearing the grand chorus of the sciences chanting in cosmic harmony the honors of the Jehovah of Revelation. And of course we had our Theological Presbyter, acute and learned, well versed in the distinctions of Hodge and Turretine and Augustine and Paul, even his prayers and his spectacles transparently systematic, and altogether a good solid fellow with appetite always keen for metaphysics and divinity

and ham and coffee. The Church has a place and use for all such different minds. With specialties of endowment, they worship the same lowly Savior. This variety of gifts harmonizes into perfect chords in the great diapason of grace. Weston felt honored in being confronted with such examiners. Ignorance alone sat nursing its yellow sneer of self-righteous scorn and thanking God that it was not as other men are, intelligent, refined, scholarly; or even as this Weston.

In illustrating a point in his trial sermon, the candidate threw before us the following picture. We had no difficulty in identifying the one of whom he spoke.

"Let me sketch briefly," he said, "one poor struggler. He came to manhood under the sway of wild aspirations which, pampered in his childhood, had grown with his growth and strengthened with his strength. It had taken root in a profession which afforded congenial field for its soarings. His day-dreams reveled there and his nights were full of its blandishments. It is needless to say that these visions dallied with fame and station and greatness—for what will not a young man's vaulting ambition grasp at? The Law had become to him a tremendous idol, exacting, jealous, unconscionable as Moloch. Just at the decisive juncture when, after years of wooing, he was about to wed himself to his profession as a bridegroom weds his bride, the Lord waylaid his soul in its ardent quest and converted him. Before giving

peace, He demanded, as always, a full surrender. The young man answered—Everything, O God, but my profession. The Lord hid his face. He had to be thrown down from his purpose as Paul was thrown from his horse. Finally the answer came—The whole world, profession and all! After conversion, confident of pardon and at ease, he tried the old trick of keeping back part of the price—persuading himself that God had required only a willingness to sacrifice his plans and not the act itself. Then commenced his six months' tossings on the bosses of Jehovah's buckler; again and again almost yielding and then drawing back under seductive anodynes of conscience—unworthiness, want of requisite qualifications, promises to do more good in his own vocation and in his own way. The truth was, he did not want to preach. Amid a certain week's flood-tide of the old ambition, he dashed toward his idolatrous purpose. Jonah took ship for Tarshish. I suppose that he had thus thrown himself loose from home that none might stand between in the contest of creature with Creator. Ah, those terrible seasons of unrest—conflicts of mind, wrenchings of conscience, dashes of remorse, and shutting of heaven against prayer! When the chosen Hebrew resisted the call too far, the record is—The anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses. Moses finally gave up, and that young man gave up; and when the loose scoffer would impugn the divine vocation and libel it as but a thing of personal fancy or

human expediency, let him first blot from that soul the memories scorched and scarred upon him of those dreadful hours in steamboats, on railroads, in parlors, court-houses and sleepless beds; and let him drown and hush forever the deep voice within—Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel!"

Awhile after, just in the very heart of these impressive scenes, the following startling communication from a well-known newspaper came to hand and burst in among us like a bombshell:—

"A wolf in sheep's clothing We understand that a man of the name of Calvin Weston is operating with great *éclat* in one of our Western pulpits. It is sad that the Church should be exposed to such impostors. A deserted wife and child in one of our neighboring counties would be much interested in knowing his precise whereabouts and the amount of his salary. After treating them most shamefully, he left them to the cold charities of the world; and we have no doubt but he is now rejoicing in his freedom and practicing a well-cultivated gallantry among the sisters in his church."

CHAPTER XXI.

AN UNWELCOME EPISODE.

A good name is better than precious ointment.—*The Royal Preacher.*

FOR many years one prayer has seldom been omitted from my private devotions. The petition has gone up more earnestly than my plea for daily bread. It is that God Almighty in His mercy would take care of my good name and guard it from defilement. From the thought of a minister's honor becoming the sport of malicious tongues I have shuddered with horror. If to any one stainless reputation is a pleasure, it is so to those of us in this high office. God has been very kind to me.

There seems to be a special guardianship of the Master over His ambassadors in this regard. It is remarkably unfrequent that the defamer's venom seriously assaults them. Thousands of their number stand with their pure honor unchallenged and unquestioned through long lives of conspicuous service. When we reflect upon the frailty of public reputation, the ease with which a slander

attaches, the triumph of the lovers of evil when a man of prominence in the Church is blackened, it is marvelous that the exceptions among the ministry should be so few and that the overwhelming majority live and die without the breath of calumny across their faces. We recognize an interposition from the skies. We believe that the shield is held by the good right arm of our King.

The parts of trial had been all sustained. The ordination and installation had been appointed for the coming Sabbath. Mr. Weston had made an enviable impression upon the Presbytery, and many of the leading members had congratulated me upon the divine gift of such a colleague. Our congregation were enthusiastic over their choice and looked forward with pleasant anticipations to the approaching ceremonies. The Sheldons were characteristically proud of the Presbytery and of the candidate who had so fully received their endorsement. I acknowledge that my own heart partook somewhat of the general gladness. It is a source of exquisite gratification to God's older workmen to see young men coming with good ability and full hearts into the vineyard and asking for a share in the labors. Weston appeared humble and thoughtful and solemn—even more so than ever. The awe of the holy vocation was upon him.

Satan grew restless in the midst of these movements in the kingdom of grace. No man of promise ever passes into life-consecration to God with-

out opposition from the gates of hell. The great adversary looked around for fit agents.

The Presbytery were still engaged in business for the Master. The community were enjoying the services and awaiting the Sabbath. Then there crept forth from some dark corner a rumor as black and stealthy as night, and trailed its putrid slime from point to point around the neighborhood. At first it was reptile-like and cowardly, affected the lower purlieus of society and crawled along by the huts and the hedges. Not brave enough to begin at the top, it hid its head and expected to grow stronger and bolder as it went, and gradually work upward from beneath, and inject its poison like green ooze from below. I did not know of this until it was a day or two abroad. It carefully avoided Weston's friends while waiting to gather breadth and force. It wanted its fang backed by numbers. Utterly unconscious of the lurking evil, we gathered on Saturday morning into the church for our closing session.

The brethren all met Mr. Weston very kindly and by their manner disclosed the respect which they had learned to entertain for the young prophet. To me this was very pleasing. There is something beautiful to my heart in the smiles of older ministers upon those just beginning to tread the way. It is right, for it is especially encouraging and cheering to the young soul when such attentions come from those who are prominent in the councils of the Church. A word of kindness does

not cost much and may help to inspire to deeds of Christian heroism. I knew that these attentions could not spoil my Weston. By the blessing of God upon his modest worth, I saw him certain to ascend some day to position beside them all.

We had been together but a few minutes when I noticed a sensation among the members and a little strip of paper passing from hand to hand. Then I discovered for the first time a similar printed slip lying in the pew occupied by myself. I took it up and found it purported to be cut from a leading newspaper published in another State—the State and the section of the State from which Weston had lately come. The reader has already seen the dreadful excerpt—A wolf in sheep's clothing, an impostor in our pulpit, a wife and child abused and deserted, and the home-thrust that the recreant husband was probably at this very time practicing his base arts among the unsuspecting of our church!

A considerable number of these slips had been distributed through the house. I looked from the terrible paper to my boy. There he was sitting as calm and composed as if there were no evil in all the universe. With that look upon his face, he was either innocent or one of the most consummate villains I had ever seen. I could not bear that these murderous charges should go around a moment longer without his knowing it. I walked over to him and handed him the one I had read. I watched every nerve of his face. I do not think there was any pallor. I cannot say that I saw

change of any kind except perhaps a slight momentary compression of the lips. As soon as his eye had passed over it, he rose immediately in his place and claimed the attention of the Moderator. I do not think I ever saw him cooler in my life. He looked around and saw the miserable slips in the hands of most of the Presbyters and he saw some feeling in their gaze. If the young man was equal to this, he was equal to anything. I was impatient to hear what he was going to say.

"I ask," he said in his natural tones, "I ask that this whole matter may be staid just here, until this silly charge may be completely overthrown. An enemy hath done this; some one who believes that I may be of a little use some day in the Church of God. I beg that the Presbytery may feel no anxiety in reference to your work thus far this week. Give me a little time, and with the blessing of Heaven, you shall not regret what you have done. I shall yet preach in your pulpits. We shall yet labor and pray together all over your broad field. You must wait upon me patiently for awhile. It is hard to see the morrow go by without that to which my old father there and the people and myself have been looking devoutly forward; but it will come in God's good time. It was very shrewd to withhold the attack until the last day that I might have no time for defeating the conspiracy; but the Master will rule it all for good and save His cause from harm. I will retire and leave you to consider your action."

The Presbytery was necessarily embarrassed. The young man's calmness re-assured them ; but they must be careful. The appointment for the ordination had been publicly announced. To withdraw it would seem to give countenance to the charge. To go forward with the ordination would be to incur a risk which as God's rulers we had no right to assume. This we were compelled to own to ourselves—even those of us most favorably disposed in mind and heart to the candidate. And then while there are always those who are inclined to believe a brother innocent until proved to be guilty, so there are often those who are disposed to believe a brother guilty until proved to be innocent. We again examined Weston's papers of transfer from his Presbytery. Their date was far enough back to afford the charge a possibility of being true. To aggravate our dilemma, we now learned that the rumor was already out through the community, hushed and covert, but growing. And we all hesitated.

Did I detect an air of triumph on the faces of Fluke and Askins ? They had not looked up while Weston was speaking. Were they glad that the ordination was to be defeated ? Were they but poorly concealing their pleasure at the puzzled condition of the Presbytery ? My mind was full of surmises but settling upon nothing.

And now occurred one of the most remarkable scenes I ever witnessed in an ecclesiastical court. The door suddenly opened and there rapidly en-

tered the last man in all the country we would have expected in such a place. He was dressed in coarse work-clothes, without his coat, and with his rough uncombed hair hanging over his forehead even to his eyes. He strode loudly up the aisle until he was standing face to face with us all. There was no lack of attention while he spoke.

"I didn't like to come, and I didn't expect to feel very much at home when I got here. And I don't. I am not smart enough to know what to call your boss, but I have a speech to make and it's got to come. I suppose all these are preachers or their lieutenants. Preachers don't like Tom Gaines, and Tom Gaines don't like preachers. So there's no love lost. We're square—even. One of them, however, I've taken a sort of liking to. I saw him hold a stick over a rascal's head and threaten to wollop him. That bad man had lied about us all until he thought he could lie about the best woman in all the world. I was behind the trees and could hardly keep from bouncing him myself. Then up jumped your Mr. Weston and cowed him—cowed him as naturally as I could have done it myself. Tom Gaines has been that preacher's friend ever since. I will not see any one hurt who defends that glorious woman."

The Moderator was restless and finally interrupted him. "But why are you here, my friend? What does all this mean?"

"Now hold on, boss"—he answered. "That's just what I'm coming to. A man that stands up

for a woman's good name ought to have his own stood up for. Tom Gaines is a villain—the worst villain on earth but one. I don't tell who that is, for he's pious. But there is a plot to ruin Mr. Weston and make you all look like a pack of fools. They tried to get Gaines into it, but he had too much respect for his character, ha, ha, ha. There is a big slander out. I know where it was spawned, but I will not call names, for he's pious. They wanted me to circulate their documents. Now don't go back on that young man. Don't fall into the trap. I heard them call it laying on of hands. Now, if you refuse to lay hands on that good gentleman, I will myself lay hands on somebody before to-morrow night. My text is, that he who stands up for Catherine May's honor, shall have his own stood up for. There ; I've had my say ; and now, boss, you can go on with your show."

There was uncouth attempt at a bow and the man strode back down the aisle. At the door he paused and said—"If you have need of an affidavit or two on this trick, Tom Gaines has a few at your service." And then he was gone.

The Presbytery was more puzzled than before. I saw Lardner watching certain faces with intense scrutiny, and I thought there were indications of no little discomfort in their bearing. During the above singular speech, one of the Secretaries of a Missionary agency of the Church had reached the grounds and entered the house. He had just arrived from another State upon business connected

with his department. God was working in unexpected ways. As soon as Gaines was through, I saw Weston, still calmer and more self-possessed than any of us, rise from his seat, walk over and greet our beloved visiting brother, and hand him the strip of paper which had so suddenly disconcerted us all. In a moment the honored Secretary was upon his feet, and had come to the platform.

"I ask the privilege of your floor," he said, "to declare this a vile fabrication from beginning to end. I cannot wait the formalities of an introduction, but must hurry my testimony before you. Many of you are old friends of mine, but I know Mr. Weston better than I know any man in this presence. I knew his father and mother, and I knew their darling son from the cradle. There is not one word of truth in that paper. The stab was designed to be very bitter; for there is no one who has ever been more sensitive about his honor or who could have guarded it more carefully. Wife and child! I hope it may be so some day; for no husband or father will ever bring to his loved ones a character more unsullied than his."

The Secretary seemed suddenly to recollect. He took a newspaper from his pocket. Then he asked again for the libelous slip.

"This is wonderful," he said. "I could have given no reason for preserving this newspaper. I hold in my hand the very issue of the *Gazette* from which this extract claims to have been clipped. It is nowhere in the columns. Here is the number

and date. Nor has this, nor anything like this ever appeared upon its pages. I am a constant reader and there are a hundred constant readers who, like myself, would have been incensed by the slander. It was concocted elsewhere and attributed to the *Gazette* in order to give it the semblance of truth. And now I know," he said solemnly, "why I am here to-day. I had other pressing claims upon my time and I tried to relinquish the thought of coming. An impression weighed upon me irresistibly. I found it impossible to dismiss it from my mind. And now I am here in time to remedy a base wrong. Evidently God has sent me. He has Himself interposed to vindicate the good name of His child."

We had no doubt of it. The rebound of the Presbytery from its painful embarrassment was exciting. The Moderator would not restrain our demonstrations. The members hurried to the young man and grasped his hand. Congratulations poured in upon him from all sides. Then, for the first time, I saw indications of weakness. Perhaps I ought to say of strength. He who had stood like a rock to the storm, seemed as soft as wax to the sunshine. There was a moisture upon his eyelids which would not stay concealed. A stern man a moment ago, he was now a boy again —as mild and melting as a loving woman. I am sure I saw tears of gratitude to God who had ruled so unexpectedly for his deliverance from the counsels of the wicked.

Lardner's gaze at certain faces never relaxed.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE ORDINATION.

Neglect not the gift that is in thee which was given thee by prophecy with the laying on of hands of the Presbytery.—*Paul to Timothy.*

THE congregation was larger than the spacious house could hold. It was early Autumn and still warm and pleasant. The doors and windows were thrown open, and around them in carriages and wagons the overflowing audience found places where they could hear. Hints of Indian Summer were in the dreamy atmosphere; and the pensiveness of the season was resting upon all around, and from the fields and forests, just beginning to tinge with sadness, a sober thoughtfulness settled down upon the waiting people. My own frame of mind was happy and expectant. I was glad because of the occasion; because of the favorable day; because of the clearing away of the late difficulties; because of the interested crowd; and because of the selection of the one who was to preach the ordination sermon.

Our brother Johns was my favorite of all the Presbytery. I had long loved him as I have loved

few men in this world. A man of ability, considerable culture, strong common sense, sound in our Theology ; and underlying all this and hallowing it all, was the evident spirit of the Master dwelling within him and sanctifying his gifts and shading his character with gracious tints. For some sublime end God had set this great soul in a frail body and made it feel through a laborious life the weakness of the tenement. Witnessing through many years his zeal, his abundant labors and his struggle with infirmities, we would have had it otherwise and would have torn up the plan of God and have given him perfect health and the strength of a giant. Perhaps we would have spoiled all and blindly destroyed that which did most to make him useful and prayerful and lovable. Undoubtedly some of the sweetest traits of the human soul come to their fullest fruitage in God's gardens of griefs and pains. Our brother's life and our brother's sermons preached together, and so they never failed to go home to the hearts of the people. We knew that his text to-day was a description of his own ministry as well as that of Paul—For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The audience was already prepared to listen to such a minister's portraiture of the claims of that office which he had so long and so faultlessly magnified.

"The call to the ministry," he said, "is a solemn, an awful, a holy thing. It is the sovereign energy of Jehovah, choosing and designating and

commissioning His own official messenger. The Holy Spirit, like the wind blowing where it listeth, comes into your cities and neighborhoods, among your friends and your children, behind the counter, on the farm, into the office, and in the nursery, and takes whom He will. Sooner or later the man yields, or suffers terribly in his spiritual estate. When you as a people move for a man as pastor, you do so in God's name and convinced that he has already been appointed to these high functions by the King of kings. It is understood in the contract. Otherwise you might well dread God's words concerning impostors of old—I sent them not nor commanded them ; therefore they shall not profit the people at all, saith the Lord."

Then he insisted that in His internal call, evidenced externally by God's people and the Church courts, the supreme Shepherd sets the man apart to a specific work. " The Scriptures say of the old priesthood—No man taketh this honor unto himself but he that was called of God as was Aaron. The Lord said to Jeremiah—Before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee and ordained thee a prophet. To Peter and Andrew the Incarnate Deity said—Follow me and I will make you fishers of men. And the record is—They straightway left their nets—left their secular employments—and followed Him. Matthew, an employee of state, formed no exception ; for we are told that he left all ; left the receipt of custom, official station, state patronage and all. In the

book of Acts we read—The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. Following the internal, the external designation was there enjoined. In the first verse of Romans, the writer introduces himself as—A servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God. After earnest exhortations to Timothy to be faithful in the one work, he says—Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them. There is a sweeping indictment in Ezekiel against the priests who have put no difference between the holy and profane. The degradation and secularization of the sacred office seems in the eye of God to be blank, sheer sacrilege. I spring the argument at its fountain head. What is the commission? Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. Preach what? Moral philosophy? Physical science? The belles lettres? The rallying cries of the hustings? Preach the Word says Paul. Preach the Gospel, says Christ. This done, the promise is, Lo I am with you alway. This not done, the world and the flesh and the devil are with him. And then I read God's record—The prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord God, when the Lord hath not spoken."

Then our preacher pressed the point that the excellency of the office over all others utters the same solemn plea for entire consecration. "The

Apostle says—If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. Again he quotes, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things. This office finds the garden of Eden a desert and human nature in ruins, and it is the voice of one crying in that wilderness—Prepare ye the way of the Lord. This office sets the seal of the covenant upon your infancy, consecrates your marriage vows, welcomes you to the Lord's Table, and speaks words of comfort to the mourners by your graves. Important? Summon your two witnesses. Call yonder glorified saint and yonder lost soul, and ask of them. The one, saved by the foolishness of preaching, points to his crown, his harp, his throne. The other, lost by the unfaithfulness of some secularized pastor, uncalled, unsent and worldly, points to the worm that gnaws forever, the death that never dies. What salvo of other engagements shall hush the shriek bursting upon the recreant minister at God's judgment bar? Absorbed by vanities, lust for lucre, love of notoriety, or even by patriotism, you neglected my poor soul and I am what I am!"

Our brother next argued that the dignity of the office intensifies the same plea. "We are told," he said, "that the preaching of Christ crucified is the power of God and the wisdom of God. The Savior draws close parallel between our commission and His own—As the Father hath sent me even so send I you. Stewards of the mysteries of

God, laborers with God, the glory of Christ; such are some of the titles bestowed by the Holy Ghost upon the ordained ministry. (1 Cor. iv : 1 ; 1 Cor. iii : 9 ; 2 Cor. viii : 23). The dignity of a court always attaches to its representative, and you know that Paul says—Now then we are embassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us. And now shall he upon whom Ineffable Deity puts these high honors, play false to the great trust, and soil and sully the holy investiture amid the potsherds of the earth? Will he turn away from the courts of heaven to crouch and fawn to Mammon? Shall he sink his exalted rank to become partizan puppet in the hands of pretentious demagogues? A scene for angels to weep over and devils to gloat at; when Moses shall stoop to veil his prostrate face amid the filth and mire trod up by the dancing, howling rabble around the golden calf!"

The single preaching of Christ crucified was argued from the fact that such ministry affords arena broad enough for all one's powers. "Even the temporalities of the church, duties calling for men full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom, were not permitted to divert the apostles from their one office. Look ye out seven men whom ye may appoint over this business, but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word. Strange, had the next sermons of these men been upon æsthetics, science, or affairs of State! We remember how our Savior refused to

swerve a hair's breadth from the one purpose of His ministry when solicited to arbitrate the question of an inheritance—Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? The time-serving casuistry of the day virtually rebukes our Lord; Master, you were a citizen of Judea; you had no right to decline a citizen's duties; as a patriot you were responsible for your political and civil influence in the land. But the Savior's example stands. The key-note of the model ministry was sounded in his boyhood's words in the temple—Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? Is the world converted and done, that the preacher gets leisure to fix up its grammars and its farms and its commerce and its wars and its governments for it? Timothy is reminded that—No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life. The devil glories in such entanglement. So the secularization of the sacred office be secured, he cares not what merely moral duties he may have to suggest as bait. Popular, specious, philanthropic, or patriotic, he is devil still!"

To the same end the speaker dwelt upon the minister's response of soul to God in the internal call; no reservation made; the dedication entire and complete; his soul flat in the dust from every hobby, like Paul between Jerusalem and Damascus; the sacred, the one high impulse, the secular abjured forever. Weston grew more solemn. The sermon was evidently taking him back to well-re-

membered hours. Again my eye strangely wandered to another intent face and lingered there.

"And now," brother Johns continued, "in the name of Him who gave helps, governments; in the name of Him who gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; we proceed to testify in solemn ordinance our conviction that God has called Calvin Weston to this great office and to affix the Church's seal by the side of the deeper seal divine. Following upon the divine ordination, we read that human agency ordained elders in every church and in every city. We obey the injunction to lay hands suddenly on no man. In three ways we trace God's approval; in the candidate's own exercises of soul; in the confidence and choice of God's people; and in the prayerful scrutiny and approbation of this Presbytery. Through this triple guard the new prophet now enters upon his exalted office. Our young brother will stand up in the presence of the congregation and of God."

A stillness reigned as of death. The audience had been brought to the point of sublime expectancy. Weston had grown to be an object of great interest not only to our own people but to all the country around. The assault of his ambushed foes had only added to the interest of the occasion. As he arose, every eye was upon him.

There was the called of God. There was the one chosen of the hearts of His people. None but the Master knew the unutterable experiences of the young man's bosom during these impressive moments. I thought that his calm eye and manly brow had never shown such depths before.

"Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice?"

The clear voice of the presiding minister pervaded the room like a question from the skies. How far-reaching the inquiry! How comprehensive and divine the creed! It covered the broad ground of human need and human hope. The mighty old Bible first and infallible! A moment's pause, and then the low distinct answer was heard—"With all my soul I do."

"Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this Church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?"

Here was the Church's favorite commentary upon the one Infallible Rule—grown into wholesome shape and power under the demands of the ages, tested and weighed, and victorious against ten thousand assaults of error, a venerable bulwark in the great battle for the truth. We all loved it because of its reverence for the Bible, the entire Bible. There was to be no forced assent. Nor would there be any difficulty in the way of Weston's pledge. His logic and his affections

were equally in repose in the old landmarks. There were no latitudinarian tendencies, no latent heresies, no covert laxness of faith or impatience under rigid Biblical interpretation, no personal hobby to bolster into undue prominence in the economy of grace, no intellectual or emotional proclivity to error to cause any fear of exact and formulated statements of doctrine. Without mental reservation or any uncandid evasion of the clear import of the question, he answered solemnly again—"With all my soul, I do."

"Do you approve of the government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States?"

The question was appropriate. The young man was to be made an Elder as well as a teacher, a ruler as well as an official expounder of the Word. He knew that God had never shaped His Church into an anarchy, and he saw the Presbyterian system of government as distinctly limned upon the pages of revelation as the Pauline system of doctrine. Convinced of its *jure divino* claims, he had no hesitation in expressing his hearty approval.

"Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?"

Without subjection there could be no government. Where there is no authority, discipline is impossible. Human councils may err, but it is sin and schism to resist them when they are right. Weston regarded the courts as possessing something more than loose advisory functions. He

was not entering the ministry to be a source of dissension and a promoter of faction; and he expected often in the coming years to submit his own opinions and preferences of policy to decrees which should seem good to the Holy Ghost and the constitutional decisions of his brethren. (Acts xv : 26). With enlightened views and evangelical humility, he made the promise without one sop thrown to pride and self.

The voice of the presiding minister was heard again and in tones that were growing tenderer: "Have you been induced, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the holy ministry from love to God and a sincere desire to promote His glory in the Gospel of His Son?"

No other qualification could compensate for this. The inquiry was pressing down into the very fountain of motive. How thoroughly it penetrated every secular pretense and cut up all worldly complications—yea, even by the roots. Weston had read the question often before in the spirit of humble self-examination, and was ready to say: "As far as I know my heart I have."

"Do you promise to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the Gospel and the purity and peace of the church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?"

It was a searching vow. Who is sufficient for these things? There would be infirmity, temptation, hardships, perhaps intimidation. Evil times,

seductive substitutes for the Gospel, and popular frenzies might demand that Zion's purity and peace be risked in merging her spiritual functions into the profane, and mongrelizing her into a tool of the powers of this world—could he stand firmly for the right, unbribed, unwavering, unseduced, as the old martyrs stood? Every century has its own forms of assault upon the minister's true sphere. In spirit we all renewed our fealty with Weston to-day, as under deep awe he answered: "Depending upon God, I promise."

"Do you engage to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all private personal duties which become you as a Christian and a minister of the Gospel, as well as in all relative duties and the public duties of your office, endeavoring to adorn the profession of the Gospel by your conversation, and walking with exemplary piety before the flock over which God hath made you overseer?"

Again it was a tremendous pledge, and covered all the unknown future from this moment to the grave. Human strength would go down beneath the crushing burden. But God had said, "My grace is sufficient for thee;" and Paul had said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." There was an omnipotent hand let down from the heavens; and more loudly than I expected, he answered, "In God's grace, I so engage."

"Are you willing to take charge of this congregation agreeably to your declaration at accepting

their call? and do you promise to discharge the duties of a pastor to them as God shall give you strength?"

I knew that Weston believed God ruled as absolutely in placing His minister in the field where He had a work for him to do, as in bringing him into the ministry at first. He saw that God had been shaping his path hitherto, and that the same hand had led him to this community. He would have cheerfully followed the same leadings to China or the isles of the sea. Endeavoring to keep his will submissive to the divine will, he felt that the Head of the Church had wedded his heart and the hearts of this people together. Now drawn to them in these solemn moments as never before, he said from his heart: "I am willing; and I will be to them a pastor as God shall give me strength."

A contract was being signed and sealed. Surely this was enough from the party of the first part. The heavens had witnessed the sacred engagement. The church had not authorized, nor had God heard, any claim from the minister to manage the people's farms or to inspect their ballots. It was a spiritual contract. It was eminently proper that the people should openly respond to their part of the engagement. They rose to their feet. Every countenance showed the felt presence of Deity. They knew there were duties to the pastor as well as from the pastor; and with raised

hands and with hearts bared before God, they gave solemn affirmation to these questions:

"Do you, the people of this congregation, continue to profess your readiness to receive Calvin Weston whom you have called to be your minister? Do you promise to receive the word of truth from his mouth with meekness and love, and to submit to him in the due exercise of discipline? Do you promise to encourage him in his arduous labor and to assist his endeavors for your instruction and spiritual edification? And do you engage to continue to him while he is your pastor that competent worldly maintenance which you have promised and whatever else you have you may see needful for the honor of religion and his comfort among you?"

That church suffers great loss, which is content to deprive itself of these impressive sanctions and become satisfied with the low thought of hiring a preacher for so much time and so much money; no real spiritual compact; no recognized Scriptural tie. Stated Supply is an un-Presbyterian name for an un-Presbyterian thing; an excrescence upon our system; a badge of degeneracy. I felt to-day how much more elevated and elevating the true pastoral idea as contemplated in our standards. No church can long afford to dispense with these solemn formalities and so forget the duties involved. It cannot fail to demoralize both the church and the minister.

Mr. Weston kneeled in front of the pulpit. The brethren gathered about him. Upon his head devoutly bowed, the hands of God's servants were placed. So we all once bowed and felt the touch of consecrated hands. Every finger once laid upon my own locks is now touching a harp of gold. Many an Apostolic scene was pictured here to-day while the voice of prayer went up beyond the stars.

"Great God of Sabaoth, we would enact no huge mockery. Come and fill thine own sublime ceremonial. Lay Thine Hand on, too! Touch us all, as we touch this man. As our life beats in contact with his, so may Thy life thrill in the contact likewise. We cannot read this deep heart by which we stand. Thou hast seen it through and through. Has it not leaned to Thee, O God? Take it wholly to thine embrace and encircle it and press it close. How shall it beat right for yonder pulpit? How shall it pass purely among these homes? Take it and enfold it tenderly. Do not let the bad world come in. Do not let it halve itself up with anything. Oh how weak and small and infantile he feels! Thou alone canst hold him erect and brave. Absorb him, engross him, and own him. Carnal ease, popular flattery, sumptuous salaries, politics, may bid for him and come across Thy claims. Do not let the bad world come in. He has heard Thy tones inviting to poverty, self-denial, and hard work—a partaker of the sufferings and of the glory of Christ. Talk

to him still, O voice of heaven! May man or devil never clog his ears to Thy whispers. Teach him, drill him, educate him, equip him, clothe him with armor. Thou hast gathered a New Testament Presbytery here and told us to act upon the evidences. We are but as children playing at sacred things, unless Thou art in the ordinance. We feel it better that Thou should'st strike him dead rather than we should send him out uncalled upon his own charges! A mother laid her hand upon his brow and gave her baby to this office. Where her hands lay first, we lay ours and devote him again in earnest consecration. We confer no virtue; we impart no fitness; we instill no grace. We hand him over to Thee. May Thy grace permeate reason and conscience and affections and will. Give him a healthy mind and heart, in a healthy body. Give him energy, perseverance, tact, endurance, eloquence, acceptability. Endue him with a passion for souls. May great waves of the divine love surge over him, swell under him, and lift him ever upward. To-day's vows must eat like cankers through his soul, unless Thou dost give strength to keep them. In a moment we extend him the right hand of fellowship to take part of this ministry with us. We believe the great Pilot guides. We feel the blest Spirit brooding here. In His name we dedicate this head and heart and soul to large incumbent duties. We thank God for a new laborer. In Thy name we set him apart to teach and to rule. We marry

him to this church. We lay them both in the arms of Jesus. And may the altar-flames descend and set his study and his pulpit and his life on fire. And now with us may earth and heaven in the name of the Master, now and ever, say—Amen."

The charges to pastor and people followed—practical, sensible, instructive, impressive, full of unction. A new minister and a new pastorate were registered in God's history of redemption.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE STRANGER.

There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord.—*Proverbs xxi: 30.*

ON the East side of The Gorge, the close observer would notice an opening through the bluffs, very narrow and so obscured by masses of vegetation as almost to be hidden entirely from view. If curious to penetrate the network of interlacing vines and bushes, the venturesome explorer would find that this cleft runs back some eighty or perhaps a hundred yards between the abrupt hills, and is, throughout its whole course, pleasantly shaded and beautifully picturesque. After once effecting an entrance, there would have been no difficulty in winding one's way along the little path which had been worn smooth by the flow of the waters after hard rains, but which was generally dry and clean with its paved floor of round pebbles. To the right of this path, and about two-thirds of the way up the recess, the careful eye would have detected a small opening in the rock, nearly on a level with the head, and

partly concealed by cedars. This was the mouth of a natural cave, widening away from the entrance until it disclosed a circular room of considerable size, with broken angles, and averaging fifteen or twenty feet across the floor.

One day, during the time of which I tell, the explorer would have seen a rude specimen of his own fallen humanity lying motionless in one of the angles of the cave, sound asleep upon his bed of leaves and straw. But for his loud, heavy breathing, you might have taken him for dead. His clothes, old and faded, were originally of good material, and still gave evidence of former respectability. Or, perhaps they had been bestowed by some chance charity. The countenance was worn and haggard and repellant. As in the thread-bare garments, so also in this faded face, was something that seemed to speak of better days. Looking upon this evident wreck, you thought of such possibilities with sadness.

What wave of human destiny had flung him here? With what lives had his been connected? Where the home? What the ties? Who had loved him? A history lies back of every chance wanderer we meet. There have been winds and tides that have blown and surged and driven his barque afar.

The rude form stirred and muttered in his sleep. He who sends the rain upon just and unjust, sends also to them both their hours for rest. But earth's

slumbers are not always downy. Even in sleep, the way of transgressors is hard.

Again he started, flung out his hand, and clenched it full of the leaves beneath him. "I will have it," he growled, "I will have it. She is mine and she shall do my bidding." His voice seemed to awake him. He opened his blood-shot eyes and looked wildly around as if expecting to find somebody near. "No!" he said, "all alone—all alone. No one here. Nobody to take care of me. Sick, or starving, or dying, or dead, none to think of me or consider my wants. It was not always so. The memory of better days is the worst part of it—worse than the life of a tramp. I will not think of the dead! There are those living upon whom I have a claim."

He went to a projection in the rock and took from it a mouldy piece of bread. He ate it hungrily, yet with a grimace of disgust. "This is my feast," he says, "while they live in constant luxury—they who are mine and ought to feed me. They would not own me. They would despise me. Petted and spoiled, they would be ashamed of my very name. And yet the name they are known by, is nearer mine than they suppose. It would not be safe to disturb the boy. The only friend I have in all this country, is as afraid of him as death. I can work upon the girl. She has her mother's look and has inherited her mother's heart. She shrank from me—I do not wonder—but, if she knew me, she would pity and be true. I *must*

have a living. Broken and vile and a fugitive, it is too late to struggle with the world. But I will not starve! Only a little money would serve my needs the balance of my days. The girl can get it for me, and she shall!"

The family were all from home, except Rose Arton. The unknown man has been watching the premises for several days, and now knew that she was alone. He saw the young maiden at noon caring for Aunt Lydia's chickens, and crept along the hedge until near at hand. The first time for weeks, his hair was untangled and brushed away from his face. He had, no doubt, been trying to prepare for the meeting and to save her from fright. Absorbed in her beautiful work, she saw no one until he had spoken. He had softened his tones as well as he could.

"I want to talk to you, Rose," he said, "about your father. I have known him well and he needs a daughter's care."

At first she started in great distress and would have fled. The one terror of her life had met her again. But his last words made her brave. There among her tame pets, she stood like a little heroine, and looked into his hard features and listened to his story. Listened intently. The mystery of her life might now be revealed. However hideous the revelation might prove, a certainty was preferable to cruel suspense. And then, too, under the thought of a father's need, the daughter's heart awoke and was ready to respond. She stood her

ground, and calmed her nerves in order that she might hear of that need.

And the unknown told of her father's misfortunes in a distant city; his ill-health, his fallen hopes, and his destitution. He had known him for years and saw him every month. He heard him talk of his children often, and had often heard him say that he could do nothing for them but needed their help instead. The young girl's bosom was moving under the recital of a parent's sufferings. The stranger saw it and again his tones seemed to soften.

"Tell me how I will find him," said the sweet girl. "I will go to him to-morrow."

"No," he answered. "Your father would not have it so. You are in a good home, and he would not have you share his. He is willing for me to tell you that he does not stand well among men, and he had rather that you should not partake the stain. You can help him better by staying where you are. I come in his behalf, and can now and then pass from one to the other. He needs money to buy the necessities of existence. If he ever desires your personal presence, he will let you know. If you can avoid it, you must not be afraid of me or tell of your fear. I am your father's nearest friend. I am here to ask the money that shall buy him bread."

The Elder always supplied his children's purse with means to use for charity or otherwise, as they pleased; and of which they need give no account.

A nice little sum had accumulated in the girl's hands. She did not pause to question the honesty of the stranger or to ask the proofs of his story. She thought only of a father wanting food. Without another word she went to her room and returned with the money, every cent of it, and placed it in the unknown hands.

"Tell him" she said, "that his daughter is ready to share with him his home, his name, his poverty and everything, and that she is waiting to bring him a child's attention and love." And again as he was turning away, she eagerly said: "Just one moment more, my friend. Were we born with any stain upon our name? Did you know our mother? Was she wicked and base, or was she pure and lovely, and good?"

The questions came rapidly and broken, as from the lips of one almost breathless and suffocating.

"As pure as an angel!" he replied promptly and with a marked show of earnestness. "I knew her well. Your father was not worthy of her. She lived and died a saint. Go on through life bearing a holy pride in your heart that you once lay upon such a bosom!"

And then he was gone, and she was left with these precious words vibrating upon ear and soul like a dream. It seemed impossible that they should have fallen so musically from such lips. Without calling in question the truth of the speaker, she received the assurance as sweet unction to her tried heart; and with lithesome step she passed

about among the poultry as delighted and gladsome as they. Again she strove to picture to her mind the mother's yearned-for face. And she began to see it at times, dim and vague; but, to her fancy, that face was resting upon her now and then in approval and seeming to smile because of her kindness to her father.

Some nights after the incidents related, two men were sitting side by side, in low conference, in the cave. It was not the first time they had met there and talked. One was probably disguised. The other was telling him of his success in securing help from the young girl. The story seemed to awaken a new interest in the mind of his companion. "I can ruin her with this," he thought to himself. "Her covert meetings with this stranger can be so construed and reported as to make this neighborhood too hot for the orphans." The idea evidently pleased him well. Then a new thought struck him.

"I have it," he said aloud. "There is a vein of splendid luck in this. If you and I join teams, we can make Allen Anson bleed to any sum we please. His money had as well be doing us some good as not. He is wrapped up in that girl. He would part with half his property before he would part with her. There is no need to wait upon these paltry sums which the girl may be able to dole out. My plan is this. She must be seized and brought to this place. Tom Gaines will help. I will force him to do it. Here the girl can be

kept for a few days, until Anson offers a thousand or two for her recovery. We can manage to receive the money in other names and no questions asked. You can then go back independent to your former haunts."

He was enthusiastic for his scheme. The stranger hesitated. It would frighten the girl; it might bring defenders. He seemed to shrink from inspiring her with terror. He said she was a good girl, and had trusted him, and had not held back her little savings from her father. The other was determined, mocked his scruples, and finally prevailed.

The plot was matured. Gaines had been approached. Surly and sarcastic and threatening, he had yielded to the imperative demand that he should be one of the party, and should do the worst of the work in pinioning and gagging the poor maiden and bearing her off with his giant strength. Rose was to afford the conspirators the desired opportunity by being induced by the stranger to meet him with new supplies down the lane in front of the Anson home after dark.

"This shall not always last," said the angry Gaines bitterly to himself. "He has used me long enough. I'll fix him yet. My time to strike will come. A man must be mighty mean to allow himself to be put foremost in scaring to death a little innocent chick like that. She nursed Catherine May day and night when I had almost killed the good woman. Catherine loves the child, and would hate it as badly as the Ansons. Tom Gaines

knows a thing or two, and when he's done he's done!"

Whatever this might mean, he went off to his work chuckling in great glee.

The appointed evening came. Rose Arton had received the stranger's request to meet him in the lane by a certain tree, and had carefully hoarded her little treasure against the expected demand. A living father had been taking deeper and deeper hold upon her imagination, and absorbing many long hours of thought. Whatever his life may have been, he was her father still, and she would be true to him. There might be a call at any time to go to his side. Whenever that call came, however delightful the Anson home, she would leave all and go. She felt that her mother would have asked the sacrifice. Whatever his faults, he was once dear to that pure and faithful mother. And so at the hour named she quietly passed out from the gentle household group and found her way to the tree. There was now no shrinking and no dread. The man was rough and coarse, and she was meeting him alone in the dark; but the solitary path was brightened by the thought that he was her father's messenger. Yea verily, and, to her foolish heart, her dead mother's messenger too.

The stars were looking down dreamily through drifts of light cloud, and seemingly too deeply absorbed in their visions of elevated purity to be conscious of any sin upon the face of the earth.

Not a sound was heard—none save the soft pressure of little maidenly feet upon the dewy grass. The still homes around the landscape, with the cheery lights winking here and there from their windows, appeared as full of peace and as innocent of evil surmise as the stars themselves. Parents and children, gathered in their pleasant circles, blessed in each other's love, were enjoying the sweet amenities which hallow the calm domestic scene when the day's work is done, the door is closed against care, and the wreath of kindred hearts beat and throb in unison to gentle thought and harmless word. In their own simple pleasures, the parent's pride, the children's trust, they forget the orphan's gloom.

The young girl stood beneath the tree but a moment, looking into vacancy, her mind far away with the absent father, when all at once she became aware of the presence of three men instead of one. She could not understand how they had suddenly approached so near without being seen. They had arrived upon the scene some while before and had been crouching from view around the tree in the tall grass. Her impulse was to fly, but the stranger spoke and she waited. Two of the men were between her and the house. While the stranger told of her parent's aggravated condition and his demand that she should be brought to him, and said that the means might seem rough, and yet that they were necessary; and while she stood astounded and puzzled and at a loss what to

do, the other two had gathered in very near to their affrighted victim. She remembered it all afterward. With her heart almost pulseless, with her attempted outcry paralyzed, she heard a second voice which seemed strangely familiar in suppressed and disguised tones — "Seize her! seize her at once! not a moment more!"

Just then a fourth figure dropped from the thick boughs overhead to her side. It had all occupied but a moment. She was almost breathless and senseless. What did it mean? Trees, meadow, house, stars, everything were in a whirl. The sudden rush of the other two men toward her had apparently been checked. Checked for a moment. Then the familiar voice said again—"Cowards, knock him down! strike, you rascal! kill him!"

"No," said Weston; "I am not here to be killed, and I am not here to be frightened. I have come to relieve the fears of a dear little girl, who will now cheer up and feel herself entirely safe. Tom is brave and will not strike the friend of Catherine May; and the rest dare not. Now, Rose, we will go quietly home and you shall rest."

He spoke as calmly and deliberately as in the pulpit. The man with the familiar voice grew desperate. Stooping, he seized a rough missile and was about to hurl it at the young preacher, when Tom Gaines caught him with the grasp of a giant and flung him to the ground. He fell heavily. "Now, lie there," Tom said. "You look well, straightened out that way. You would make a

splendid corpse. Don't you budge till these good folks get out of hearing of your pious rage!"

"You must not hurt him, Thomas," said the pastor. "His sins are finding him out. Catherine would not have either of us injure him. This poor child shall be troubled no more. Lean upon my arm, my little frightened dove, and let us find the warm hearts that love you."

During these rapid moments, the stranger had not spoken. He stood looking on without an attempt to interfere in any way. As Weston and Rose moved toward the house, the man said—"The girl was not to have been hurt. I never wanted this. Her father shall know of what she went through for his sake."

New life stirred through Rose's heart at these words, and a smile forced itself over her beautiful face when she heard the laugh of Gaines following them through the night.

"Ha, ha, ha; here is a nice heap of holiness for you! It seems to have lost its back-bone. I guess I shall have to lift this peace of perfection on to his feet again."

The day before this scene of tragedy and comedy occurred in the bosom of our unsuspecting and peaceful neighborhood, the incomprehensible Gaines had sought the home of our Catherine and asked for a private talk. "You Christian folks," he said, "believe in somebody they call the Old Boy. Well, I guess Tom Gaines has struck his tracks. He seems to be perambulating around

here with a good deal of looseness. What are preachers for but to watch his pranks? I saw your Mr. Weston do it once, and he is the chap to do it again. Three bad men after that little Rose Arton all at once, is too bad! It will scare the pretty little canary into fidgets. Tom Gaines has had enough to do with all sorts of deviltry to be of no little service to the parson in helping him to defeat his Old Boyship's antics. The church couldn't employ a better spy in the camp of the enemy. Satan would never dream of suspecting *him*."

Tom laughed at his own wit. In his own peculiar way, he told her all about the conspiracy and pointed out the means for its discomfiture. There were special reasons for Weston being there. "I cannot now tell who the men are," he said sadly. "But let the preacher keep his eyes and ears open. That's what preachers are made for."

Not many days after the events detailed, Mr. Weston might have been seen strolling occasionally through The Gorge. The Autumn ferns were in their glory now, and were transplanted from time to time to the vases in his room, there to grow in their singular beauty and adorn his hours of lonely study. There are many, apparently unimportant actions in the minister's life of which the world can never know the depth of meaning.

Rose took her troubles to the ear of God.

CHAPTER XXIV.

OUR SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

For He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children; that they might set their hope in God.—*Maschil of Asaph.*

ALL my chapters, however broken to the thought and provokingly unconnected, are moving on to a certain end. To the eye of God, the life of an individual or the life of a church, is one rounded symmetrical whole. We can see it only in parts. In the divine providence, there is always action and always progress. Every day finds His purposes farther on towards their consummation. There are no loose ends and no waste. Influences flow from a thousand directions, apparently independent, and converge to the ultimate result. The history of every movement in the kingdom, is a hundred histories in one. In our finite way, we can only pick up the various threads here and there, and trace them, in our chapters, on toward their final aim. Writer and

reader must remember that God alone holds all the seemingly disjointed threads in one eternal, omniscient, omnipotent grasp; binds them together in one grand bond of unity; and sees the end from the beginning. Yes, blessed be His holy name, He and He alone!

We had frequent conferences of our entire Session about the Sunday-school. Two aims were prominent. One was to instill the feeling that this institution was not, in any sense, a separate organization, but a component part of the church itself. It was not even a nursery of the church, but the church nursing; not a work of the church, but the church at work; not simply a machine for training somebody's children, but, in teaching them, the church itself is to be trained. If I have succeeded in making the distinction plain, I have put a valuable thought upon my page.

In order to utilize the conception, we endeavored to enlist all our members, and, more especially, the parents, in the work. It was feared that many heads of families were inclined to delegate to the teacher, however young and inefficient, the entire responsibility of the religious instruction of their offspring. Among these young immortals, was a large proportion of the church's own baptized children. If this comparatively modern institution is to be a blessing instead of a curse, it must not be allowed to supplant the orthodox home-training of the past. The old preacher remembers when there were no Sunday-schools, but

he does not remember the time when God did not hold fathers and mothers responsible for the religious instruction of their children. And he knows that, in those older days, there were faithful ones not a few; and that many boys and girls went forth from among the Bibles and hymns and prayers and catechisms of home, well equipped for the battle of life, and growing soon into the heroes and heroines of our faith. And the old preacher is very jealous for all that was best in the past. So jealous, that sometimes he fears that the Sunday-school may be permitted to overshadow the ancient Presbyterian household regimen of the fathers. Alas for both the fireside and the Church, should that day ever come!

We would, therefore, endeavor to enlist every father and mother, and where both could not possibly attend, then, certainly, one or the other, in this service. Among various quiet influences, the children themselves were led to plead for this at home. The little ones would not long beg in vain. As conducive to the same end, the Session resolved that they would themselves religiously set the example and lead the way. Nothing over which we had control, should prevent a single minister or elder from being regularly and punctually there.

This prepared the way for the accomplishment of our second aim; to have it felt that the school was so far an integral part of the church, as to be under the immediate control and supervision of

the church's officers. In order to this, we resolved, as ministers and elders, to assume the superintendency, in regular rotation, week by week, according to age. When any school business was to be transacted, the Session sat, formally constituted, in the presence of the whole school, and discussed and voted upon its interests. Others were consulted, especially the parents, but the decision was always with the Session. The children would learn to understand and respect the government of their Church and feel that they were under it; and, as officers, we would be led to appreciate more fully our duty to the Church's catechumens.

We determined, also, that our teaching should be thoroughly doctrinal. All great primary truths are simple. One of these, deeply fixed upon the young mind, would be worth more than all the half-truths in the world. It is a mistake to suppose that the child's attention can only be secured by puerilities. Even where it cannot understand, it may be trained to reverence. It will accept, in simple faith, truths which your reason and mine will never fathom. No child-mind staggers in embracing such doctrines as that of God's Sovereignty, of the Trinity, of Atonement by substitution. Hid from the wise and prudent, they are revealed unto babes. While her eyes were glazing in death, one of the little girls of our school was heard whispering, "Father, Son and Holy Ghost; Father, Son and Holy Ghost." The words had

not been used in her room during her sickness. Fading, but fading into life, she uttered the words of the great mystery again and again. Perhaps she knew more in that hour than all the theologians of earth. If not then, she did a few moments afterward!

There is no reason why, through Scripture stories and illustrations from nature, the orthodox tenets of our Church should not be so rooted in the heart and intellect of the pupil as to remain there as bed-rocks of truth through all the latitudinarian blandishments of the future. Even where not fully comprehended, their very grandeur will leave an impress which cannot henceforth be satisfied by the world's superficial counterfeits of Christianity. The Westminster Confession of Faith was an honored book in our school, and lay by the side of the Bible on our pulpit desk. Weston loved to pass from class to class and help the teacher in adapting its formulated doctrines to every lesson. Occasionally, he questioned the whole school upon it and explained the answers with appropriate incidents. It became very attractive to the children. Presbyterianism will be a sufferer as long as much smart machinery is allowed to crowd out the Catechism.

The Library was guarded very carefully. No book passed into the hands of our youth until examined and indorsed by the Session. I own that we were somewhat critical of even the literary excellence of the volumes, for I religiously

hold that the principle of æsthetic taste is a gift of heaven, and that we will be held accountable up there for its cultivation as a means for the elevation of the soul and for the glory of God. We met with many productions of crude and unpolished style; crude and unpolished, perhaps, because written specially for children. In all such cases, we discarded them as utterly unfit for our work, and an insult to our offspring. But, however beautifully executed, we excluded, most rigidly, all merely moral tales in which the grace of God was not distinctly recognized as the source of all purity, the love of Jesus the spring of all holy motive. "Burn it, burn it!" said old John Phales; "the children shall not touch it; away with it; it is a religious lie; burn it!" It was a book in which a pretentious patriotism was put so prominently forward as to appear the sum of all godliness, and virtually to overshadow the cross of Christ.

Carefully sifting the true from the false, we did not entirely eschew chastened, wholesome fiction as a medium of religious instruction; believing that a sanctified imagination is one of the noblest faculties of the soul, and that, when consecrated to the honor of the Master, it has accomplished, and may accomplish, by its exquisite creations, glorious service in the domains of truth. We required that the pictures should be just as near to life as the biographies of the great and good which formed a leading feature of our collection,

and which were a favorite department with all of us. I say as near to the truth, for it must be remembered that every biography is only the individual life and character as conceived by the imagination of another. If an author chose an imaginary narrative as machinery upon which to weave lessons of duty and doctrine, we did not object; but it must be brave, emphatic, unadulterated, undiluted, gracious truth—as firm and uncompromising for the teachings of Scripture as the Confession of Faith itself. From all error in the shape of the lax Broad-churchism and Broad-worldism pervading the sensational juvenile publications of the times, stimulants to free-thinking, narcotics for orthodoxy, our children were guarded as sacredly and sedulously as from the poison of asps. Our souls shrank from seeing the child passing out of the temple-doors with little dimpled arms hugging to its breast an edition of the literary Satan, tricked out in a beautifully bound and elegantly illustrated volume as an angel of light. As conservators of the spiritual interests of posterity, our motto was—Watch the books.

Our school had been in the habit of securing every new singing-book issued from the press. This had been done almost irrespective of the compiler's character or the character of the hymns, and with a tendency to pay attention rather to the jingle of the notes than the meaning of the words. More than once I had detected positive error in some of these popular songs.

More frequently, in order to secure general circulation and large sales, the publishers, in their effort to exclude everything offensive to any and all denominations, had supplied us weak and watery dilutions of sentimentalism, carefully eliminating from the praises of our children all allusions to the strong formative truths so much needed in building up robust Scriptural faith and character. Their sins of omission were ingenious and systematic, and deliberately sent the young voice careering upon a swell of empty sound and senseless harmony. Weston was suspicious of all music-books issued by irresponsible money-making publishers, and gave constant preference to those bearing the imprimatur of his own Church and honoring her rugged doctrines. Understanding the tastes of the young, fully in sympathy with their love of melody, he made his selections very skillfully, and stoutly refused to let erroneous sentiments or meaningless platitudes creep into our school to mar its teachings and mock the ear of Jehovah. The good old hymns of the past came in, now and then, very impressively and grandly among the quicker measures, and, wisely intermingled, never failed of an elevating effect upon the devotional feelings of the children.

While studying a pleasing variety in the exercises, nothing farcical or undignified was countenanced even for a moment. Wherever God is expected, the injunction stands guard about His altars—"Let all things be done decently and in

order." I think that ours was getting to be a live school, and that, too, without resorting to questionable appliances. Pointed five-minutes' talks were always encouraged; but I believe there was a wholesome prejudice among both old and young against ludicrous anecdotes. A visiting brother unfortunately ventured upon one of these in the face of what ought to have appeared a higher grade of management, and apparently without point or purpose, except to elicit a general titter. Old John Phales laid his hand upon his shoulder and said—"A circus would have relished it just as much, my friend. It was very funny. We all laughed. And, undoubtedly, the devils laughed too." I am convinced that the sentiment of the scholars themselves was in favor of a decorous gravity, and fully sustained the elder. Avoiding Puritanic rigor on the one side and sacrilegious levity on the other, our ideal was gradually reached in a quiet, happy cheerfulness which prepared both mind and heart as good, willing soil for the sower.

Brief mention may be made of other purposes kept prominently in view by superintendents and teachers as belonging to our ideal.

Regularity and punctuality. Essential in the business world, these were held to be essential also in morals. We had no right to train our charge to become failures in either. We would counteract every contrary tendency, as seriously damaging in the formation of solid religious char-

acter. The distribution of attractive illustrated cards, precisely at the moment appointed for beginning school, and at that moment alone, was a pleasant and helpful device in securing this aim. I noticed that there was more difficulty with the teachers than with the pupils, in this regard.

We strove to make our time a busy, earnest hour. Nothing must drag. There must be no tedium. Under no consideration must the children tire. The attention must be kept. A half hour of live interest was better than thrice the time of lagging and jaded waiting.

The children were to be visited in their homes. Always in sickness. Always in case of absence. Once every two months under all circumstances.

The pupils were to be set at work for Christ. If a member were sick, all of the class were induced to call at the house and see their classmate. Every child was sent out to bring in new scholars. Tracts were distributed through the community every week by districts, and, in turn, by the various bands into which the school was divided.

We aimed to gain the assistance of the children in setting up a family altar in every Christian home. This duty and privilege was sadly neglected among us. I believe that our little boys and girls very easily learn to love the morning and evening hour of chapter and song and prayer. Once begun, they miss it when omitted. Asked by the teachers to try to bring it about, we knew of frequent instances where the plea of the child

was listened to without the heart to refuse. One Sabbath morning, in a house where family worship had not been known, a lad took that day's lesson to his father after breakfast, and asked him to read it aloud to him and then pray. A pillar of remembrance was there erected. It would be a bright day for earth, if such scenes were enacted in every home the wide world over wherever the International Lessons are used.

The uppermost, the absorbing thought in all our exercises and all our plans, was to be the salvation of the children. We admitted no device, no expedient which we could not prayerfully endorse as conducive to this one great end. Nothing was countenanced, even for a moment, which was merely entertaining without being clearly a means of grace. We tried to meet and labor and part under the feeling that immortal destinies were probably to be decided every Sabbath. We were educators for eternity.

We tried to expect immediate results. Thousands of us instruct our children without believing that they will become Christians until after they are grown. A halting faith hopes that the planted seed may spring up somewhere in the indefinite future, but not now. If the people do not believe, they will offer no true prayer for it. "According to your faith be it unto you," said the Savior. And so the Church's children wander far on into the dangerous adult years, their regeneration unclaimed, until they become chilled and tainted and

hardened in sin. We tried to regard the conversion of our scholars — yea, even in the infant classes—as a probability any week, while using the due means of grace. "You must try to come back a Christian next Sabbath," said a teacher to a little girl in one of our classes. "Why not now?" said her lips and eyes. "Yes, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation," answered the earnest teacher, feeling the rebuke deeply. We believed that these words apply as truly to the children as to anybody, and we endeavored to act upon that faith.

Once, and sometimes twice, a month, Weston preached a sermon to the young. The whole service was specially adapted to the children, and they learned to regard it as their own, looking forward to it with pleasure, and reading, in preparation, such Scripture passages as he named to them a week beforehand. To simplify and make the truth interesting, he studied these sermons even more carefully than his sermons to adults. It was noted that the grown people gathered to these discourses and listened as attentively as the young. In becoming converted, we all become as little children and learn to love the simple truth. Weston's style was plain, colloquial and child-like; but never childish and foolish. God's message and God's messenger were never demeaned by clownishness. The sermons were always solemn. Every pastor ought to be a children's preacher. Perhaps there is a little stealthy intellectual pride

in the plea of many ministers, that they cannot adapt themselves to the juvenile capacity. It may be done; and the ability to do so will be creditable to both intellect and heart. The duties of the Apostleship to the nations were grand and imposing, but Peter was not to forget the little ones whom he had seen in the Savior's arms—"Feed my lambs." And, in his great Pentecostal sermon, he did not forget it, but said, as earnestly as anything he had spoken that day—"For the promise is unto you and to your children."

While the impression was quietly gaining ground, that some good thing was at hand from the skies, and while the evil one seemed more than ordinarily busy among us in antagonism to the Gospel influences, I could not help thinking of the gracious indications of revival spoken of in the closing of the Old Testament canon, and having reference to the great upheaval under the Forerunner—"And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

"I am becoming very much troubled about my wayward boy," said Lardner one day after school was over. I had never heard the father speak of the son before. There was, usually, not much feeling in the elder's face. It was there, now.

"Oh, that my father and mother were Christians," said one of the smaller pupils to her teacher, the same Sabbath.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE FIRST STAR.

He hath filled the hungry with good things.—*The Virgin.*

"JUST one seal, O God! for this burden is greater than I can bear. I bring it yet once more and cast it on the Lord. Is it true that I am not called to break the bread of life to this people? Am I running unsent? Then, Lord, remove me though it be by sickness, by opposition, by insanity, or by death. I faint for some sign from heaven. I watch and strain and beat the air. These crowds of people are rushing down a steep place. I cannot hold them back. And yet just now I ask not crowds. Oh that they all might be saved! But that is not now my quest. I am too weak for that—limited in myself, not in God. But Oh for one soul! Just one soul, plucked from the burnings, brought to Christ, happy in redeeming love, and attributing its salvation through precious blood to my poor efforts Oh for one soul! to think of me as its spiritual ather, to thank God for some sermon of mine, to prove that the

Master is with me in my work and that I am not an abortion of the great Commission. The glory shall be Thine, precious Savior. I want to hide behind the Cross and let the Cross do it all. Any body! anybody! O God. Yet I find myself thinking of *one*. Again and again, the thought comes back. Is this thought divinely sent? Would God that so it might be! Father, Thine is the choice. I magnify Thine electing love. Choose whom Thou wilt and place the jewel in my Redeemer's crown and there let it shine and let me see it shining. If it be Thy will, let me know that my poor endeavors helped to put it there. My very being cries out for it as in a death-gasp—just one seal to my young ministry! What shall I do, unless some soul is saved? This room will be worse than a sepulchre. Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief!"

It was after midnight. The lamp burned dim and late. This was the cry of a man popular, promising, active and zealous in his work, one who to outward appearance certainly had enough to cheer. All seemed anxious to make his life pleasant. His congregations increased. He could but know that his services were appreciated. The public eye saw no cause for unhappiness. Here he was awake and bowed with sadness while all the neighborhood slept. How little the world knows of such hours!

Rose had taken her troubles to God. They had grown very heavy upon her young life. Had they

come in a form which she understood and which she could have fairly faced, she would have borne them better. The mysteries amid which she felt herself to be walking; the uncertainties clouding her past and her future; her new anxieties about her father, apparently in disgrace, probably suffering and needing a daughter's care; her dread lest Willy might learn of the late attempted abduction and be driven to some desperate act; her increasing fear that the kind loving hearts of Uncle Allen and Aunt Lydia might somehow be involved in grief for the orphans' sakes; all these causes formed a complication of care and suspense under which her inexperience groped the more darkly the more she tried to think her way through. From the kindest of motives she tried to disguise her troubles from those at home and this only made the burden heavier.

With but one person had she talked about her cares, and she began to reproach herself for involving him in dangers to which his office ought not to be exposed. Even his life was jeopardized the other night. His sudden and unexpected appearance upon the scene and his defence of her might be used in some way by enemies to injure his ministerial influence. His duties were already many and onerous. She had no right to add her personal annoyances to the weight he was already carrying. More especially while a stain rested upon her descent and while her sensitive heart feared that her best friends might be disgraced

through what had been and might be in her history, she was not willing that her pastor's name should be subjected to cavil through friendship for her. His popularity and his usefulness must not suffer for her sake. With difficulties pressing and a true friend so much needed, we would be glad to believe that not a few of maturer years, even of the people of God, would have been found upon trial as unselfish and as considerate for a minister's influence.

And so she was driven back upon the best Helper of all. That gracious Helper had been waiting as He ever waits for the trust of the young. The heartsease was blooming nearer than she knew. Her bosom had been delaying, as the bosoms of the young too often delay. Many years were probably before her. She was but a girl and there need be no haste. True, the religion of Jesus was very attractive. She desired to be a Christian and meant to be some day. A Christian like Catherine May, when she reached her age. A Christian like Aunt Lydia, when these glossy locks should begin to tinge with gray. The thought was very beautiful to her. Very beautiful in the far perspective. But she was not at rest. Sometimes a sad face seemed to rise up between her and those distant years, and to look into her eyes with sad rebuke. She knew that she was not treating her Savior right. She was lingering among His enemies. Her prayers were the prayers of an ingrate. Each month was adding sin to sin. And her indefinite purposes brought no peace to her soul.

The young maiden loved to be among God's people. She was glad and immediately attentive whenever the conversation took a religious turn. Mother Howe's Scriptural hits were her delight. But Rose always went away from such companionships dissatisfied and a-hungered. She loved to study the Bible and was never unprepared in her Sunday School lessons. Her favorite cha ters were many and the pages showed frequent reading. From the Prayer-meeting none was less frequently absent and none there appeared more devout. The sermons of God's servants were a great pleasure. The minister could not fail to notice her open, thoughtful, intent face while preaching the way of the Cross. It was always shining as a bright spot in the congregation. She could have given clear outlines of all the discourses of the young preacher from the time he came. He knew, as preachers always know, what a good listener she was; and he prepared every sermon under the feeling that he would have at least one inquiring soul in every audience. I have no doubt but it helped him to preach. He followed up these practical topics by putting into her hands appropriate religious reading. These books were perused by her with increasing interest and with earnest thirstings after the true and the good.

And some will ask—Was she not a Christian? Growing up in a godly family, guarded from temptation and taint; a sweet young woman, breathing no impure airs, and as innocent as such a house-

hold could make her; amiable, conscientious, no wilful overt acts of sin; mentally accepting the Scriptures as the Word of God, entertaining no doubt of the historic facts in the life of Christ, and feeling that she desired to obey and honor Him, was not this a child of God and an heir of the kingdom? Jake Askins, constantly on the watch for foibles, might have to invent where he longed to detect; but to her own conscience and to God she often confessed many faults of which we saw no sign. The romance of the world and the romance of religion might have pictured her as morally pure and needing no change; but she would never have recognized the picture of the undepraved and innocent as meant for her. She dreamed of no hope based upon the goodness of Rose Arton. She wanted her nature changed, and knew that she could not reach heaven without it. She had been moving along through her girlhood, as many young maidens are moving; well-disposed to the Gospel; leaning to the truth; with sufficient knowledge for the salvation of the soul; in conduct above reproach; shrinking from what is evil; and not far from the kingdom of God. The eye of man might see no difference but of age between her piety and Catherine's. And yet little Rose felt a great void in her heart and in her life, and knew that she was not a Christian.

How long the young girl might have lingered upon the borders of a decision, we cannot tell. The almost-persuaded among the youthful of her sex are

very many—pardon and peace sincerely coveted by them and nearly within their grasp. There they tarry until a revival or a death or a timely word or a visitation of pain brings them in. God knew what was best for Rose. Her calm placid life needed an interruption, and He gave it. Upon her for wise reasons it had fallen rather than upon others of our young damsels, although the results were to reach them in the end. The way grew hedged about her. The burdens became too heavy, and she was brought to see that upon Christ alone she could impose them all without a wrong. The time had come in her life when she felt, as never before, unquenchable cravings for the Savior's love.

And now the sense of her ill-deserts became intensified. Her guilt rose dark and crushing upon her. The rejection of her Savior through so many years, loomed up into vast proportions before her quickened conscience. Whatever her possible virtues otherwise, she did not stop to inquire while she stood staggered in the presence of this one sin. Jesus had been offering, not simply pardon, but Himself for years; and upon Him, yea upon Him, she had turned her back. Every moral act dwindled into nothingness before that one crimson conviction, aggravated with ingratitude and stained with sacrificial blood. It was *her* sin that had bruised Him. Her impenitence had put Him to grief. She saw herself standing among His crucifiers. A girl's unshrinking hands had driven the nails and thrust the spear.

And now another prominent character of my story comes again upon the scene. Tom Gaines was right; he is a busy actor in every true drama of human life. His is not a pleasant portrait among my characters: but were I to keep him in the background or to veil his features, the reader would be wronged, and my narrative would become unworthy of credit. Must I introduce him even among my favorite pictures of the lovely and the beautiful? I have been young but now am old, and for many years have watched his ways and never yet have I looked upon the saint who could say—I have no acquaintance with him. The best neighborhoods are not free from his visits. From his intrusions the most guarded chambers are not safe. Beauty is not exempt from his attentions. Age does not escape him. Only by dying, does childhood evade his wiles. Even the altars of our God are not too sacred for his presumptuous presence, and the great congregations can leave him wholly behind only when they have marched up the streets of gold. I speak of the personal historic Devil.

Now this crafty personage was sedulously active and holding close espionage over every serious impression in our community. I knew he had not liked the situation through many months. And it was exceedingly mean, but exceedingly like him, to match his great strength against the earnest struggles of the unhappy orphan child. But he was wise enough to know that just here was the strategic point in the contest now joined,

We need not marvel therefore that close to the ear of Rose and in tones which she did not suspect, he whispered new doubts. Nay, he put them into her own lips and made them to arise as her own unprompted thoughts:—"I have gone too far. His compassions are great, but they cannot cover my case. I have sinned against light and knowledge. He has plead so long unheeded, that He can care no more for my case. I have probably alienated Him forever." And then again: "My present interest is purely selfish. As long as I was happy, I refused His love. It is only because I am in trouble, that I have thought of His claims. If these difficulties should pass away, I would forget Him again. And He knows it. He will not accept a heart so full of self." And again at the enemy's instance she thought; "This is not genuine repentance; it is remorse. There is self-condemnation in this, but no faith. It is the sorrow that worketh death."

The evil one loves to teach Theology and has long since been made a Doctor of Divinity by some half a dozen literary and scientific institutions of wide repute.

So at another time she reflected; "I have sinned away my day of grace. The Spirit continually repelled, has deserted me. My stubborn resistance to His call has grieved Him finally away." She little thought that the Spirit's bitterest foe had dictated every word. At another crisis, even amid intense emotions of distress, these

thoughts were suggested by the adroit adversary; "I cannot feel. Feeling is dead. I know my duty but it makes no impression upon my heart. This heart seems utterly callous. Oh for the tenderness I once felt! Oh that these eyes could run down with streams of emotion! If I could only melt, there might be some hope left." Satan is satisfied so long as he keeps the inquirer's thought upon mere feeling, to the displacement of the Savior.

And again he said to Rose; "You have committed the unpardonable sin. Your Bible has told you plainly—'There is a sin unto death, I do not say he shall pray for it.' That is evidently your case. You see that your prayers and struggles avail you nothing. You are beyond the reach of mercy. It is too late; and you had just as well throw these anxieties all aside and enjoy yourself the best you can."

If we ask at the Throne, God will guide to our pulpit themes. Weston had been more than ordinarily exercised that week with regard to the text and topic for the following Sabbath. He brought his anxiety to the great Captain of God's armies, who keeps His forces so well in hand and never suffers a shaft to fly wide of its mark. In a way which the wisdom of the world may not understand, the minister's mind settled upon a passage in the very chapter from which Satan had been quoting:—"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God that ye may know that ye have eternal life."

God was in the preparation and delivery of the sermon. There in the pastor's study, his natural faculties brooded over by the Supernatural, the weapons were quietly fashioned which were to defeat the machinations of hell; and when God's day had come, point by point the suggestions of Satan were met, the way of life portrayed, and the evidences of acceptance described. Salvation is a gift, not a reward of merit. It is an accomplished fact for one believing, not a work to be completed by human emotion or human service. It is the feelings of Jesus that save us, not our feelings. He asks at our hands, not righteousness, but trust; and the moment we trust Him, He treats us just exactly as if we were righteous. For the believing soul has Christ's righteousness transferred at once to his account. The Savior does not keep us waiting by any upbraidings for our past. He does not throw in our face our years of sin. He is in loving haste to blot them out. He requires no atonement at our hands. One moment of believing in His word and in Himself, and instantaneously we are regarded by Him as if we deserved no punishment. Virtue goes out of Him to save, not out of us. Not of works, lest any man should boast. Like His own divine charity, Jesus suffereth long and is kind. While there lingers the least interest in Jesus and a care for His salvation, we may be sure that His heart still warms to us and gives His Holy Spirit to draw us to His bosom. Pardon is ready for the soul that

wants it. Then being justified by faith, we have peace with God. For faith is self-evidencing. They that believe on the Son of God, know *therefore* that they have eternal life. God has kept His disciples writing and His preachers preaching, to show us that. The author of our text was told to write many very simple things to help us out of our doubts and unclog our notions to the witness of God. It is just as easy to know whether we believe God's testimony, as it is to know whether we believe man's testimony. He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself. It needs no miracle, no shining meteor, no dream, no rhapsody to tell us we believe. As soon as we take Christ as our personal Savior, we are saved and we are entitled to the assurance that we are saved. He that hath the Son, hath life. Ah, glorious possession—Jesus mine—Jesus yours! And then whatever our guilty past, we *know* that we have eternal life!

Had the preacher peered into the secrets of the week, and did he know her doubts to-day? Every word seemed meant for her, and to be indeed a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Was the minister speaking? or God? She sat almost breathless; spell-bound; afraid to move. She saw her mistakes. She felt every word to be truth. Heaven seemed bending very near—and nearer and nearer. Salvation was for the undeserving—there was salvation for her! Forgiveness had not to be merited. She was the chief of sin-

ners, but then the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. No sooner would a difficulty invade her mind than it would be slain from the pulpit. Old familiar truths opened up before her; clear, new, fresh, sparkling with light. Every allusion to the Savior awoke strange thrills through her bosom, and sweeter and sweeter. Where was she? The world, congregation, everything around her, faded into vacancy; and she was alone with her new experiences and the utterances from heaven. She had misconstrued her Savior as unwilling, as slow, as loth to save! And here He was taking her just as she was! How gracious—how endearing—how precious! And when, in closing, Weston quoted from the radiant chapter the twentieth verse, there was one jubilant heart before him pulsating to every word and appropriating it in the trustful depths of her soul: "And we know that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ."

Saved! How her late troubles dwindled and shriveled in comparison with present blessings! Jesus was on her side, and to Him she could safely commit all the issues of life. Nay, she thanked God for the anxieties which had impelled her to the Cross. Ever since she entered the elder's household, she had been praying; but never to her was prayer like that in which the new born soul joined after sermon. And upon the Psalm

that followed her spirit lifted and tended away as if God had indeed put a new song in her mouth. It was more than joy to have broken with her foe and breathed in this new love within the temple doors and among the hallowed ordinances of God's own house. The rich words of the benediction were redolent with new meaning, and her brightened girlhood went homeward irradiated with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost.

Verily there was solid joy that week in the Anson house. Allen and Lydia built tabernacles for three upon the mount. The elder led in his daughter in her new beauty, and modestly introduced her to the faithful circle of prayer. She had often thought of that place of privilege almost with envy. And now the young convert sat down under the shadow of her Beloved with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to her taste. The evening was one of thanksgiving by all for what God had done and of strong faith for the full shower.

The Sabbath of Rose's reception into the church was an high day in Zion. The Session shared our fellow elder's happiness and enveloped the young candidate in sympathy and love. The dread that is sometimes felt in passing this safeguard of our Church, may be easily relieved by gentle tact and winning courtesy. Only a few questions were asked—just enough to draw forth her expressions of personal trust in the sinner's Savior and to react

upon her faith by showing what the Church accepted as the true foundation of Christian hope. A long, searching inquisition at such hours, as if we suspected the candidate and were trying to puzzle an impostor, is unnecessary and repulsive.

It was a beautiful scene, when in front of the pulpit and before the eyes of the large audience, impressed and solemn, and still as death, the dear young maiden stood up like Paul for baptism. Alone; one from the many not owning Christ; leaving her companions behind; young and solitary, she arose amid the intense stillness to assume her vows. We saw no fear, no embarrassment. The calm of the inner depths was upon her brow —the repose of a gracious trust resting over her like a bridal veil. The orphan was very lovely. To her former beauty was added a softened, chastened tone which we had never beheld upon her before. The religion of Jesus does throw around the trusting female soul a heavenliness transcending all attractions besides. I have witnessed many consecrations but I can never, for many reasons, forget that hour and that face, and I think I shall carry the picture up with me to mingle in among the faces of the angel world. It is not wonderful that my bride of fifty years ago seemed to come back from the past and to stand to-day where the sweet features of Rose Arton were standing.

The Session had expected me to administer the ordinance. But no—the young man had led her

to Christ, and the duty and the privilege were properly my colleague's. I had never until now beheld such an elevation in his mien. This was the approval of God upon his ordination vows. It was the seal to his ministry, for which he had yearned and plead. He was walking upon heights which I shall not atrempt to describe. And his words sounded that way while he drew forth her avowals of trust and consecration, and her reliance through Christ upon the sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost to wash her white as snow. And then the beautiful symbol, the clear transparent water, God's gift to man, fell upon her forehead as the baptism of the Spirit fell upon the forehead of the apostles; and the pure drops trickled down her cheeks like tears of penitence and love. The heart must have been callous, indeed, which could have refused to move under the scene of harmless young girlhood owning her dependence upon the Savior for every pure thought and every pure emotion. In the midst of the noiseless, motionless congregation, such a baptism was very impressive. I have no quarrel with those who differ with us as to form, but the more I have become familiar with the two, the better I have approved and loved our own. There were manifestations of subdued feeling in every pew. Many of Rose's age tried in vain to suppress their tears. Was not to-day the beginning of glorious days?

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE SCHOOLMASTER.

Oppositions of science, falsely so called.—*1 Timothy vi : 20.*

INTO my history during these days falls a little piece of romance in which certain of my readers are expected to feel unusual interest. The old preacher is well aware that for such the narrative has seemed to flow very sluggishly. He has never lost his sympathy with the brighter feelings of youth. The sound of marriage bells is still the sweetest of music, and we hope that they may be rung for the patient reader after awhile. Meantime we remember that the Bride of the Lamb has been preparing her wedding robes even for centuries and that the Bridegroom still tarries; so we will be wise and not hasten God's providences, or feel that the bridal day of any of His true children is unduly deferred in the Divine dispensation.

The young man pressed his hand to his bosom with undoubted demonstrations of feeling, and gazed tenderly into the blue depths of Catherine's eyes—But let me begin at the beginning.

The Common School system of our State was one that had never given me satisfaction. It seems to have been launched by our legislators under the nightmare of an imagined antagonism between popular education and all that was sacred in our old parochial schools and religious colleges. It was to be so entirely divorced from Christianity as to become in spirit and prestige sheerly and offensively *unchristian*. Under the pretext of avoiding sectarian prejudice, the advocates of the secular system have themselves become a veritable sect, bigoted and intolerant in their anti-religious tempers and arrayed in aggressive partizanship upon all questions affecting the truths of revelation. Through management of skeptical minds, certain of these public schools have developed into great free-thinking establishments, enthroned upon the ballots of a Christian people and thus wielding all their influence against the foundations of the people's faith!

Even the best communities forget sometimes to guard this great interest, elect ungodly directors, and permit the employment of ungodly teachers. Amid the crowd of hungry applicants, we ask for credentials of literary culture only, and forget to inquire as to religious character. I would as soon feed my children upon slow poison as to put them under the baleful shadow of a teacher's influence whose opinions were even unsettled or unpronounced upon the claims of Christianity. In the main, our neighborhood was cautious in this

matter and regarded the education of the young as a sacred trust not to be lightly committed to anybody. But with all their care, they were sometimes deceived.

Professor Tindle Oistur came to us with unexceptionable testimonials. Starting forth under the imposing auspices of a Normal School diploma, he had held many responsible positions and found little difficulty in outstripping all competitors for the votes of admiring school-boards. If as fluent in imparting his erudition to his pupils as to the directors, he could but prove a most successful educator. He certainly magnified his profession; and, as a votary of the pedagogical art and a benefactor of the dear people, he did not expect the withholding of due honors. It would have been very ungenerous to even think of affectation of learning or a studied parade of accomplishments. He lived and breathed latinity and science (at least through the length and breadth of the text-books) until it was awkward to express his thoughts in other than learned terms. A suspicion of pedantry or of shallowness, would have been an affront upon the noble Free-School System.

One of our directors appreciated the responsibility of his office and was wary. The certificates of acquirements were all in due form, but was the Professor a Christian? The question was antiquated and perhaps narrow-minded, but the director did not hesitate on that account. And the Professor

was good enough not to be offended nor to charge him with being illiterate or behind the age. Under such circumstances, even the unreasoning prejudicies of those in authority had best be respected. No, he was not a church-member; he had never been so fortunate as to gain admission to any communion; but undoubtedly to the scholar and the philosopical student of history, there were many things in the Church worthy of great consideration. Patronizingly. Christianity had wrought vast changes in the annals of our race; helped to solve many metaphysical problems; afforded a wide field for discursive thought to a man of letters. Patronizingly. He had long been pondering the question of uniting himself to the Church of God, but a multiplicity of other absorbing studies had interposed to prevent his doing himself the honor. In fact he had the greatest respect for a historical institution like the Church.

Did he see any conflict between revelation and science? He owned that he entertained the greatest respect for the Bible. It was quite an ancient book; suggested many interesting archæological inquiries; always had many admirers among learned men. There were parts of it which from a literary stand-point were very sublime. The world could not do without some such moral codes. He had always been considered a friend of the Bible. One of the unfading memories of early years was that of his mother with the Scriptures in her hands and her dear eyes upon its pages.

Had he the genius of a Raphael, he would throw the picture upon everlasting canvas and baptize it for immortality with his tears. Pathetically.

And so the questions were volubly evaded, and the Professor became the Principal of our school. More than one hundred immortal souls, in their impressible years, were entrusted to the moulding influence of his character, his beliefs and his example. To their minds he was a representative man in the world of learning; a man whose views were to have great moral weight as emanating from one skilled in all knowledge and indorsed to them by their parents and the entire community. It is a serious thing to place a child under the daily drill of an autocrat whose attainments are constantly magnified by the youthful imagination and whose errors we have accredited by our choice of him as teacher. Thus backed and recommended by the suffrages of a cultivated Christian people, six score of our children sat down five days in the week at the feet of this modern Gamaliel, Prof. Tindle Oistur.

I do not choose to protract the painful recital. He had the power and he used it. We had given him the opportunity. I would have blamed him more, if we had ourselves been blameless. We were abundantly able to support a select parochial or Presbyterial school. We had deliberately handed over the training of our children to the loose management of a soulless system owning no allegiance to the God of Heaven. I shudder at the

risk we ran. To-day out yonder upon the landscape that school-house looks to me like a great well-set evil snare, sustained by the taxes of God's people, encouraged by popular enthusiasm, with open doors through which the unsuspecting parents were for some time sending their children as into the fires of Moloch. While here at my window I sit and write, I see a dark cloud gathering in ominous folds, sailing up over recitation rooms and play grounds, and shutting away the beams of the noon-day sun. The same cloud which overshadows that house, projects its shadow over every home in the neighborhood.

Gradually it began to creep abroad. Prof. Oistur was wiser than all the sacred wisdom of the past. The religions of the world were well enough. He had the greatest respect for them. They served as a restraint upon the common herd. The more enlightened did not need them. The Vedas, the writings of Confucius, The Zend Avesta, the Koran and the Bible, all served their purpose. There was some truth and a great deal of fable in them all, but the vulgar mind needed something of the kind. Science was to be the Bible of the educated. The advanced thought of the age was to be satisfied with nothing but facts, demonstrable facts. He talked glibly of the Positive Philosophy and of the potency of matter. The children listened and wondered. He told them that perhaps their ancestors were little birds in beautiful nests, or bead-eyed squirrels upon the forest-boughs, or

playful fish in the sparkling, murmuring streams. "No," said brave little champion Bright Face, "all of us in this neighborhood are descended from Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden." A smile of superior enlightenment, clearly implying a scientific negative, passed over his encyclopedical features. It was easy for him to imply more than he uttered. "What if we should find," he said one day, "that the laws of nature are so fixed that it would be foolish to pray for rain." He could readily have denied that he asserted it; but the doubt pregnant with a thousand evils, could thus be easily implanted.

As the spiritual interest deepened in the church, the Professor grew more restless and bolder. Now and then some of the parents had discovered skeptical expressions upon their children's lips, but they preferred to believe that the pupils had formed mistaken impressions of the teacher's words. After awhile these things began to be discussed through the community, and reports were spreading of infidel views put forth by the Professor in discussions with persons out of school. Rose's conversion and the scene in church and the seriousness resting upon some of her companions, seemed to excite in him a sudden and irrepressible enmity against Christianity. He forgot his former prudence and more than once vented bitterly his opposition to the authority of the Scriptures. These superstitions were to be rapidly set aside by science. Geology had already proved Moses

an ignoramus, dreadfully obtuse as to the Pliocene and Miocene periods to say nothing of the Triassic and Palæozoic; and so in fact the whole Bible had fallen behind the intelligence of the times. Reason, our guide and Savior, was fast demolishing old myths. Miracles were the dream of a barbarous age and impossible under the reign of Nature's inflexible laws. We knew far more than Isaiah or Paul. The modern mind had broken loose from leading strings. The grand development must go on. Man was already as far beyond the present religious faith of the churches as he was beyond the monkey-stage of evolution.

There seemed to be an especial spite against Weston. The young minister had been very reticent, but I knew that he had never been highly impressed with Prof. Oistur's claims to extensive learning. The latter had at first courted an intimacy with the preacher and tried to flatter him into a mutual admiration alliance, and talked much of the extraordinary culture of the young pastor. Mr. Weston treated him courteously but failed to lionize the new prodigy of learning. I happen to know that he had seen from the beginning the shallow pretensions of the teacher and regarded his presence in the community as a calamity. After awhile Prof. Tindle Oistur evolved an inability to find entertainment for his capacious intellect in the dry sermons of the young old-fogy. He could not content his progressive brain with the lifeless shells of a fossilized Theology and the

vapid vaporings of emotional appeals. The latter were especially distasteful. He very gravely doubted whether there were any such thing as soul. It would soon be demonstrated that thought and sentiment were only properties of highly organized matter. Perhaps electricity would account for all the phenomena of the so-called spiritual. The brute world supplies beautiful links of both the mental and moral in the great chain. The sermons that could interest *him* must address his reason and not his feeling. The feelings were inferior phenomena. The coming man would expatiate in a region of pure reason. He was trying to live in that sublimated way himself. He had no patience with that exhibition of emotion made the other Sunday. The young preacher was as weak and maudlin as a woman. From lofty mountain heights of self-complacent superiority, the Professor looked down with contempt upon what men called heart.

These sentiments did not reach the public all at once. The children were the most exposed to them. The seriousness in the church had invaded the school, and the Professor's flings at Christianity had grown more frequent and undisguised until the older pupils could not fail to understand their import. Parties sprang up in the school, some defending the Bible, some arguing against it. The latter had come to think it manly to imitate their teacher and talk flippantly in the superficialities of a vast juvenile erudition. They had suddenly de-

veloped into materialistic scientists. They stepped with a certain stateliness and looked wise. They were martyrs to the intellectual advancement of their race. They began to torture flies and grubs into an acknowledgment of kinship to themselves. They compassionated their less enlightened fellows. I was grieved to hear that Willy Arton was leaning to this sect. Prof. Oistur was delighted at Willy's conversion.

There arose a stir among the people. Parents grew uneasy and began to complain. Others in the community admired and defended the teacher. There are always those who can be captivated by a specious assumption of knowledge. To such the Professor was a very learned man and an ornament to the neighborhood. If Christianity could not endure fearless inquiry, then so much the worse for Christianity. To their minds, the churches had better attend to their own business. They had nothing to do with the public schools. The preachers had best remain quiet and not dare to criticize this great popular interest. The most illiterate in the community began to talk the most scientifically. The developement of knowledge among us had been exceedingly rapid. The tadpole had at one jump become a frog!

Running parallel with this illustration of the doctrine of evolution, was another example of spontaneous generation, farther beneath the surface and for a while concealed from the public eye, but engaging and riveting the most earnest atten-

tion of our sublimated philosopher. In Prof. Oistur's proud intellectual sufficiency there had occurred a collapse; a development backward; a retrograde evolution; if the scientific mind will forgive us the postulate and the nomenclature. An emergency had arisen in which his omnipotent science had failed to sustain him. Even Geology was not equal to the demands of the occasion. The fact is—Another idol had been found. The Professor's strength had evolved into weakness. Prof. Tindle Oistur was in love!

This will assist us materially in accounting for his growing antipathy to Mr. Weston. Plainly defined among the teacher's clearest cognitions was the hypothesis of an imminent conflict between his own interests and the interests of the preacher. He was convinced that Weston was likewise in love with the peerless object of his own supreme affections. Upon this hypothesis he concentrated great profundity of thought. And the hypothesis was murderous to his peace. Nor was it the first time that the unproved hypotheses of scientists have murdered the peace of human souls. And this became as a reality to him in all his plans and hopes, a very bitter reality. The Professor was without facts, but the hypothesis served him in the place of facts. The young pastor was his rival. A tremendous struggle was impending. The piety of the preacher was upon one side; his own scientific accomplishments upon the other. He trusted to the survival of the fittest!

Our dear Catherine had been the unconscious object of all this depth of interest and wealth of sentiment. True feminine piety wins even upon ungodly men. Despisers of Christianity desire in wives those qualities which Christianity alone bestows. And so Prof. Tindle Oistur grew sentimental; wandered in sight of the Mays' on moonlight nights among the evening bugs; gazed away at the skies most astronomically and settled his meditations upon the bright particular star; and would have been happy indeed to hurl another offensive satellite entirely out of her orbit or at least far into apogee. Love had loomed up into one of the great cosmic influences, as important as electricity or evolution or gravitation. In fact, love reminded him of all three. Perhaps it was this that manages them all and more too. At least it managed him!

And then he came and went down upon his knees before the poor astonished girl. Like many who refuse to bow to the great Creator, he bowed most scientifically to the creature. His hand was pressed to his bosom as reverently as if feeling after a fossil, and his eyes were trying to melt into hers as earnestly as if hunting for protoplasm. At first she was embarrassed and distressed, but his words reminded her of other things and she grew calm. His tones were burning with passion. His intellect had laid down its imagined sceptre and the emotional was humiliatingly supreme. He

protested his devotion. He talked of the depths of his soul.

"But, Professor," she said, speaking distinctly and low, "you have been teaching your pupils that there is no such thing as soul—no soul to be cared for either by earth or heaven!"

The sweet amiable woman—these were the first cruel syllables her meek lips had ever uttered. And even these were spoken in gentleness. He burst forth into new protestations of tenderness. His emotions were beyond conception. His feelings were too intense for utterance. And he laid them all at her feet.

"Ah, Professor," she said again, "you have not hesitated to express your contempt for all feeling—even the sacred feelings excited by the anguish of the Cross. You have ridiculed all deeper emotion, even the holy flow of tears of a new-born soul, as beneath the dignity of an intellectual being?"

I believe I would have condemned it in Catherine, did I not know her provocation. Her heart was yearning to her Sunday School class; she knew that the Spirit was there moving; and she was aware that the Professor was doing all he could to reason their seriousness away. Her object was not to punish but to prevent. He saw that she understoad his crime in using the public schools as a means through which to war upon the people's faith. But he was desperate. He did feel; and he must win, and at all costs. He

told of his family and his fathers—honored in the walks of literature and the temple of science for many generations. He laid the fame of his progenitors at her feet in the illustrious name of Oistur.

"But, Professor," she answered, "you have not even yet traced your descent as far back to-day as you have sometimes done in your school."

Could my girl resort to sarcasm? She must have been very sorely tried in her solicitude for her pupils. He begged her not to torture him. He would disavow all his foolish theories for her sake. They were mere speculations at best, but here was the great *fact* of his love! He had found out that there was such a thing as heart. He was willing to abjure his skeptical notions, forswear his so-called science, accept the Bible as divine, and own that there is a God. He was ready to confess that Christianity is a part of the common law of the land, and that in using his position as teacher to undermine its sanctions, he had been committing a fraud upon the confidence of many who employed him; but he charged our godless educational system with having started him wrong in his boyhood and inveighed against the system itself as still supplying, through its text-books and its promotions, strong temptations to use his profession in the interests of unbelief. He implored that she would no longer trifle with his love, for he would yield himself implicitly to her influence to be guided into the truth. And then Catherine spoke very solemnly:—

"I honor a man's honest love. It is not possible for me to play with so sacred a thing. Yes, Professor, you have a heart. You have a soul. And so have those precious young people whose faith you have been willing to taint. Do not do so any more. You seem troubled to-day, but you are preparing far worse trouble for them. I thank you for the offer of your heart, the highest honor any man can bestow. There are possibilities of good in a young man's ingenuous love above all that you could bestow in the gift of your intellectual strength. But I say to you frankly that I cannot accept your love. I had hoped that no man would ever again ask my love. You have done it and forced me to be candid. If you were the best man in the world, I could not love you. You must not think of it any more. But henceforth I have a friendly interest in the Professor and I shall pray for his salvation. You did not know it, but you were doing a great wrong when you pressed an unbelieving, unregenerate heart upon the acceptance of a Christian woman. God's child runs a terrible risk in marrying an ungodly husband. I had far rather go to the grave than expose my poor weak faith to such a strain. I hope, my friend, that you will some day be the happy husband of some good woman; but oh, be sure that your heart is trusting in Jesus before you ever again press its acceptance upon any true believer. Remember my words, that you could not do the one you love a greater wrong."

Again he protested that he would surrender all his vagaries and become a Christian for her sake. But no, she assured him that these promises were based upon a wrong foundation and were very seldom kept. If he did not love the Savior for His own sake, he would not love Him for hers. And it would be impossible for her to love the Professor even if he were to become a Christian. Love is not ours to command and bestow, either as a motive or a reward. But there *was* a promise which she would beg at his hands. His profession entailed upon him solemn responsibilities. Under his influence destinies were taking shape for heaven or for hell. Would he still persist in making the public schools a vestibule to the bottomless pit? Would he not promise her that he would never again attempt to poison the unsuspecting faith of a child?

He promised. On that promise he based an-another plea for her love. The scene was growing oppressive to Catherine. She had bidden him arise at the first; but he still knelt, and now clung to her hand and burst into tears.

Just then the door opened and in stepped Tom Gaines. He was often with Catherine during these days.

"Well! well! well!" he said. "What is all this? The blesssd woman first got Tom to praying, and now she has got the Dominie to praying. But then again I'm not certain but I've missed my reckoning. Tom Gaines be hanged, if I don't

believe the scientific schoolmaster has been getting spooney!"

"Whaso diggeth a pit shall fall therein; and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him—Proverbs, twenty-six and twenty-seventh"—was Mother Howe's geological comment upon the Professor as teaching and taught—his romancing an his dromance.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE REVIVAL.

Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?—*The Song of Songs.*

WRITER and reader have reached an epoch in the history of the old Stone Church. Gradually and certainly we had been tending toward the glorious scenes now bursting upon us. God had arranged it all. Anson's anticpations of good and his devout circle; the other three prayer meetings with their increasing interest; the new impulse to our Sunday School work; Catherine's beautiful character and her noiseless labors; the sessions of Presbytery and their wholesome impressions upon the people; and, interpenetrating and impelling every other instrumentality, the faithful and orthodox preaching of the Word; all these Gospel influences, which I have detailed so carefully, were wisely and divinely preparing the community for the blessings hovering over us. God was about to set His seal upon an ordained ministry and upon His regular and orderly means of grace. We understood not the Divine Coun-

sels at first, but the day was coming when we would be able to read them aright. Even His permission of evil in the very midst of His Sovereign purposes of mercy, will after awhile appear luminous with good. I have no doubt but the heresies of the Marstons and Flukes and their imported missionaries; the disturbance under Darby Plym and his coadjutors; the endeavors of the schoolmaster to corrupt the faith of the more intelligent as the other reformers had tried to sway the lower orders; the constant activity of the irrepressible Askins; the presence of the twins among us, and their persecutions; and even the multiplied troubles of Nancy Smith; were all a part of the one great plan of God in drilling us for what He had in reserve. Satan was busily striving to defeat the coming good; but I can now see that all these machinations were ruled into unwilling aids to the victories of the Cross. Our story has aimed to keep along in the line of God's providences up to these present memorable days. If the reader has grown weary with waiting, so too it must be remembered that the young preacher waited and watched and prayed and labored on, through this same staid march of events. So, all over the land, are weary ministers watching and laboring and waiting—mourning often and long that the redemption of the Lord moveth slow.

I think we all felt the solemnity as we entered the church. I think we were all impressed with a consciousness of something which we could not

have defined. Our congregations were always decorous and hushed in assembling—no confusion, no buzzing of voices up to the moment of worship —but to-day the stillness, the thoughtfulness, the intenseness of self-communion were new and indescribable. Every one that came within the doors, old or young, seemed to pass at once under the influence pervading the room, and to sit down calmed and quieted. To my feelings, the very motes floating in the sunbeams appeared to pause and grow still. As there I waited in the midst of this strange spell of expectancy, the words of the hundred and twenty-sixth Psalm kept singing themselves in pleasant rhythm through my passive mind—When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.

I am sure it was no trouble for Weston to preach that Sunday. There are times when it is electrifying to rise in the presence of a waiting congregation. The minister knows that power is with him and that the audience are giving as well as receiving. Faith soars and the tongue is set on flame. In every word eternity impends. Mind and heart press into utterance. The soul moves as freely as if disembodied; expands; warms abroad; leans from the pulpit to the embrace of kindred soul. Thought and emotion mingle and broaden and deepen and flash abroad like the flight of angels. Weston seemed lifted up and borne out of the common-place as by an irresistible energy within yet beyond himself.

Ah, it was more than man. God's chosen time had come. He had bowed the heavens and filled His temple. Mercy and truth and inspiration and prophecy were in the text;—Wilt Thou not revive us again that Thy people may rejoice in Thee? The aspirations of pastor and people went up together in great cryings of soul. Was there a sentence in the sermon which was not winged with prayer? I saw Anson and Lydia wearing a repose of joy which told that they had heard from within the veil words like these—Be still and see the salvation of the Lord. I saw Mother Howe assenting with assured smiles and emphasizing nods to every Biblical promise the preacher uttered. I saw our Catherine sitting with face full of a heavenly serenity, bosom at peace and trustful, unmistakably in close fellowship with the skies. All about the room were those to whom this season of merciful visitation brought no surprise. The soul within me catching new fervor from every beaming countenance, my eye fell upon Rose, and she seemed to me transfigured. New views of her Savior's attractiveness were opening before her, and she was rapt away in happy amaze. Her second spiritual baptism was falling upon her. And now while drawn in the Spirit toward the young convert, and rejoicing with her that rejoiced, my eye took in another scene which thrilled my heart anew and filled my cup to overflowing. Talk on, young preacher; preaching is no hardship now; oh tell still further of God's faithfulness and the stream

that makes glad, while I linger with yonder weeping group, and in silent sympathy offer the prayer of faith.

Heaven bless my children! No wonder the tableau in the woods came back to me—the six bright maidens in that grassy alcove weaving their wreath of leaves and flowers to crown their new pastor's brow. How full of youth and beauty that day of blooming May! I remembered my hope as then I looked upon their lovely faces, that they might ere long be won to Christ and purity. Sparkling over with girlish gladsomeness, I had thought of but one thing needful to make them verily happy and truly beautiful. And now is there not a crown weaving indeed for the young pastor's forehead, gemmed with bright stars and unfading, when God shall make up His jewels? Here again they were a group of six, the five fair maidens seated with their believing classmate, all bathed in flowing tears and contrite for girlhood's sins. Ah Catherine, Catherine, no wonder that you seem caught away from earth to-day and seated in such close neighborhood to the verities of Glory. Your entire class for Jesus! This is reward. This is God's pay. The Sunday-school was presenting the first sheaves. Did I speak of beauty? These penitent pearls, trickling down young womanhood's cheeks, telling of sorrow for sin, seen of God and angels, and awakening rejoicings in heaven, were far more beautiful than smiles that beamed or joys that gladdened under the elms on that fair day of

Spring-time—or that ever beamed and gladdened from hearts that knew not Jesus.

The minister's voice grew tenderer and tenderer. Plead on, young herald. Tell of salvation at hand; tell of the saving PRESENCE. "Then shalt thou call and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry and He shall say, Here I am." There have been times when the speaking was difficult and thought frozen, and the call in doubt, and the pulpit a terror; but there are no such clouds now.

I saw that God was bringing our Elders to the front. It was obvious that the Spirit was possessing them all more and more. For the world, I would not have it otherwise. It is a sad day for the church when God's appointed leaders lag in the rear of a proffered work of grace. Few men differed more widely in temperament and types of piety, but we had special needs for each of the three. Anson had preceded us all. Phales, eccentric but firm and deliberate, afraid of excitements, suspicious of all new measures, was never found wanting when the voice of God was clearly heard. The rugged old man was our Elijah; Anson the milder Elisha. I felt, too, that Lardner was assuredly moving. There had never been a lack of a certain kind of devotion to the interests of the church, sensible and wise in counsel; but was there deep spirituality of soul? Perhaps we did him injustice. Perhaps it was his way. There are vast diversities among the subjects of the kingdom of grace. But the old preacher and the young had

found ourselves longing for greater heavenly-mindedness on the part of the elder—for the sake of the church and for the sake of Lardner's own family. There had of late been a stirring of the deeper waters. His poor boy had wandered again. I think the father was welcoming the Spirit to-day. What a joy to Weston if his sagacious counselor should pass under a mighty effusion of the Holy Ghost!

We departed from the temple doors that morning with our citizenship in heaven. Little was said. We looked into full eyes and pressed each other's hands and went thoughtfully home. I heard Mother Howe in the kitchen quoting from the Old Testament about the revival under Joshua, the revival under Josiah, the revival under Ezra. I took my Bible and read over the stirring scenes in the time of John the Baptist. Then I turned to the second chapter of Acts and read, and read again, the history of the model revival until my soul was alive with the burning words. I sat down with the disciples with one accord and felt the cloven tongues. Continuing to lift the pages, we found the whole book crowded with these mighty displays of power; the Dispensation of the Spirit beginning and spreading and conquering amid a glorious galaxy of revivals. Why did our minds persist in following such channels of thought to-day? Was the blessing indeed at our doors? Weston was much upon my heart. Would he be equal to the occasion? Would this youth rise upon the crisis to-night?

"And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth?—Exodus four and eleventh." The thought of the Mother was tending in the same direction as my own, and was answering me without knowing it. "Lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world—Matthew twenty-eighth and twentieth." She was taking the promise of God's attending presence as absolutely all-sufficient for those called out to great deeds under the divine commission. As we went back to church that night I heard her whispering to herself—"I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed and my blessing upon thine offspring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses—Isaiah forty-four and third and fourth." Again I listened and knew that she was counting upon large ingatherings—"Who are these that fly as a cloud and as doves to their windows? Isaiah sixty and eighth." Now her mind evidently recurred to Weston and in her faithful heart she connected the old and the new pastor together in the expected harvest—"And he that reapeth receiveth wages and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together—John four and thirty-sixth."

It was manifest that the interest had deepened since the morning. God's people had lingered at the Mercy Seat. About them I thought most at first. God approaches the unconverted through His Church. The loud lay evangelization of the times would soon prove an abortion were there no

organized churches to be wielded to its help. If our membership were not thoroughly revived, I expected but small results from the world. The house was filled. We read that, when the praying disciples were baptized by the Holy Ghost, multitudes came together; and so it has been ever since. As soon as Christians were stirred, our community was stirred. The stillness of death, pervading the audience before a word was uttered, and indicative of God's nearness, was overpoweringly impressive.

I saw my children again grouped about Rose as in the morning. The shadow of a great sorrow was upon their faces. There was no motion except the rise and fall of their bosoms as they breathed. Jesus wronged and wounded was pictured before their thought. Their young voices had joined in the cry—Crucify Him. I thought of my own hours of conviction and of sad broken-hearted groping far back in the distant past, and I pitied these fair mourners from the depths of my soul. Nor were they the only ones that would soon be appealing to our sympathies.

The text fell in awful solemnity from the preacher's lips—"Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel," The November winds were moaning around the eaves and sweeping showers of faded leaves to their graves. There were hints of death in the frosty night—

suggestions of the creeping final chill — sighs abroad like the sighs over new made tombs. The stones across the brook gleamed in the moonlight pale and spectral through the windows and brought the dead very near. Nature and the night seemed bent upon seconding the preacher's words.

We saw men braving and defying the irresistible destroyer; infatuated; fooled; insane; bewildered; rushing upon his barbed weapons; breathing his poisonous breath; locked in his sepulchral arms; ravished away from home and ambitions and friends and all pleasing anticipations. We inspected our own death beds; we gazed upon our own corpses. Then the curtains trembled still farther apart; unrolled even from the present; and we saw ourselves consorting with weird skeletons; skeletons dry and shriveled and haggard; skeletons of purer purposes; skeletons of courted happiness; skeletons of buried hope; skeletons of the immortal's nightmare-dreams of dread; bleeding us like vampires; puffing their venom at us; paralyzing our noblest faculties; murdering us even in the midst of our probation; the terrible daily dying within the tightening grasp of immediate spiritual death. And then we heard and looked and saw the three grinning, jeering, exulting sisters; the cruel, relentless, inexorable trio; death physical, death spiritual, death eternal; meeting in horrid league about the defenseless victim; haunting him; torturing him; dancing in whirling revels around the darkening room; gloating in his anguish;

laughing at his remorse; and now, amid the shivering, shuddering, final gasps, seizing him in triple embrace of woe and hurrying him away to the drear realms where the death-gasps of the soul go on and on forever.

And around the eaves the November blasts rang out a wail, ghostly and wild, as if of a spirit lost.

Across this living funeral march of our race through impenitence and sin toward the everlasting doom, we heard intermingled the deep utterances of a faithful God; pleading, warning, entreating, remonstrating, reasoning, wooing; voice tenderer than a mother's, accents all burdened with solicitude; and amid the sweet tones we seemed to hear again and again the sound of the gurgling of blood from the feet, hands and side of a Sufferer. No, oh no, the sinner need not die. Far more distinctly than the sheen of yonder tombstones, we saw One coming forth from a rocky grave, triumphant and loving and a Conqueror, bringing life and immortality to light.

Sermons on occasions like these cannot be reported. The preacher went on up upon the demands of the momentous hour—carried on up by the Spirit of the living God. Weston himself marveled when it was over, and knew it was not himself but Another. The Law and the Gospel were both doing their appointed work. God was owning His chosen vessel and speaking through his lips. In such moments it becomes true indeed that—The word of God is quick, and powerful,

and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And the mouthpiece of Jehovah feels it—knows it while he speaks. Happy is the man who has these exalted experiences early in his ministry, and learns under God's own endorsement what a heaven the pulpit may be.

The Law had cried of danger and death; the Gospel had told of a remedy. The Law had broken in upon the dreams of carnal security; the Gospel had melted the heart. The Law had fulminated dread punishments for sin; the Gospel had offered forgiveness for all iniquity. The Law had shown the transgressor lost; the Gospel had presented a Savior. The Law had been a rigid schoolmaster to bring scholars to Christ. The Law had slain; the Gospel would make alive. The tombstones across the brook might be stepping-stones to glory.

In the morning, Christians had been praying mostly for themselves. They were now ready to pray for others. Amid the deep silence that hung hungering upon the preacher's last words, I stood up and asked those who desired an interest in the intercessions of God's people to arise for a moment to their feet. An act of committal could do no harm. The petitions of the righteous have helped many to the kingdom. We all came to the Cross over the pathway of somebody's prayers.

My five girls arose together. There was a breaking up of hearts all through the house. A moment,

and in another pew stood up farmer Winthrop, whose attentive face you will remember our noticing during the first sermon that Weston preached. I have been waiting for George for many years. Moral, upright, neighborly, kind, but not at rest, he has halted for weary months upon the borders of a decision. Many earnest supplications will go up in his behalf from this community to-night. Another moment, and two of the Valey children arose; and in the more prominent pews two of the Sheldons, brother and sister. The poor and the rich were coming together to Him who though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor that we through His poverty might be rich. Oh that this might be the time for Mr. Sheldon himself to move. Pride and his number of years would be stubborn barriers in his way.

A moment, and a little girl of ten summers arose over to the right, and simultaneously on her left arose her grandfather of seventy years. From the same household and unknown to each other, the two extremes of life were applying to that Savior who died for old and young alike. Just as we were about to join in prayer and praise, another form stood up slowly from one of the rear seats. We have seen him before. Occasionally of late he has ventured in near the door. We remember him in the touching story our Catherine told of the drunkard's home—the abused wife, the bleeding child. Reuben wanted deliverance from his suicidal appetites, and was flying to the Stronger

than the strong man armed. When he reaches the hills of the undepraved and unenslaved, perhaps it will be no sacrilege for him to remember our Catharine amid his hallelujahs to the Lamb and wish her to share his joy. I am thinking that oftenest when God has stoniest hearts to soften, He sends some holy woman to lay her soft hand upon the ungainly life, cover the rents under the balms of charity, and smooth away the harsh rigors with the sisterly assertions of a common humanity.

The time had evidently come for protracting our meeting. Never inclined to force such efforts, we did not hesitate to follow the leadings of the Spirit. Heeding the call of an extraordinary occasion, we appointed services during the week. There would be no display of machinery, no smart trickery, no dependence upon strange, startling measures for working up an unhealthy interest. John Phales would not have lacked supporters in opposing any resort to the human strategems of abnormal times, the novel expedients of religious mountebanks. But God was with us, and His children knew it and were zealous to work while it was day. We expected to use God's own ordinances and trust implicitly to the power of the Holy Ghost. Souls were asking for the bread of life. We must be up and doing. Our narrative will linger among these services and their results. We will be lingering among a happy people. The gladness of the heavenly refreshings was in nearly every home.

Even Nancy Smith was almost hopeful. Her onerous burdens of troubles had been reduced for the time to but one—the foreboding that the infidel schoolmaster would supplant Weston in the affections of Catherine May, and that the hard-worked young pastor would die an old bachelor after all.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A SCENE IN SESSION.

And my sin is ever before me.—*Fifty-First Psalm.*

THE blessed work grew upon us. God's children forgot their secular pursuits and became absorbed in the interests of eternity. These are heavenly seasons in the Christian experience, when the great whirl of worldliness loses its grasp upon the soul, and it goes up into fellowship with Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The lovers of Jesus made such progress in the Divine life that they sometimes doubted whether they had ever been converted before. Many of the best and most consistent were mourning for their sins as one mourneth for his first-born. And then we saw them coming out of these clouds, joyous and jubilant and ready to work for others. I perceived that the whole church had taken a step forward, and I rejoiced in this sure evidence of a genuine revival.

It was therefore no surprise that every night there were new inquirers asking the way of life.

Some whom we expected to move first, lingered on apparently unimpressed; some whom our poor faith would have put last, were leading the way to the Savior. Like the wind blowing where it listeth, the sovereign Spirit passed among the people, calling and convicting whom He would. We stood humbled and adoring in the presence of God's electing love. It was ours to labor on, reverently submissive to the Supreme Manager, and acknowledging in every act and every emotion that all the results were from Him. The supernatural was too manifestly present for human instrumentality to exalt itself; and when we had done all that we could, we stood adoringly still to see the salvation of the Lord.

My five young ladies had all embraced the Savior. None of the inquirers seemed to linger long amid their gloom. As soon as God's people concentrated their prayer upon any case, the seeking soul was very soon indulging hope of acceptance. This is the usual characteristic of meetings where the faith of the workers is strong. On the other hand, I have known occasions where many were aroused to a sense of sin, were under intense anxiety, and sought the intercessions of Christians, but found no peace for dreary weeks; some, not at all. In all such cases, I have noticed that the church itself was not thoroughly revived.

These slow pages cannot tell the whole story. It would take eternity to tell it. There are some things I *must* write down for the joy it gives me,

and things in which the reader also may by this time feel a kindred interest. I think it was the fifth or sixth day of our services, when Lardner's wayward boy came into our inquiry meeting, certainly in great distress. The attention of many was drawn to the young man, and our hearts were stirred very deeply. We shall not soon forget the father's face and attitude at that moment. Surely the depths were broken up, for the prodigal was returning. Lardner, it must be owned, had never before encouraged such meetings. They were not to his taste and he had never felt at home in them. But for a year he had been crushed under heavy anxiety. The father's heart was nearer to breaking than we had ever known. Now the gracious revival had touched him in the one tenderest place of all, and the chill intellectual piety burst over its dykes and barriers in great floods of joy. There was no outcry, no groan; it needed none. The elder's face gave one look heavenward, all full of sublime thanksgivings which spoke more plainly than words; and then he went upon his knees and arose no more until after the benediction. In two days, I saw them locked in each other's arms—father and son, as we trust, children of the kingdom. Henceforth there was no firmer friend of revivals in all the Church of the Lamb.

At another time. the proud Mr. Sheldon walked calmly in and took his place among the inquirers. When I went to him, he said—"My dear old pastor, I can stand it no longer. When this meeting

began, I was sorry for it. It looked too much like the vulgar enginery of the sects, and I feared it would bring no honor to our church. But all my six children have now come to Christ, all ahead of their father. My whole family Christians but myself. Oh, sir, this will not do! I thought I was a friend of the church, but I am sure now that I have only been standing across its doors to keep others out. I see that I am a lost sinner. I feel that I am a poor, worthless, wicked man. What can such a miserable sinner do to be saved?" That strong, stiff, aristocratic pride was lying low, humbled, prostrate at the foot of the Cross. We were learning every day more and more of the omnipotence of grace.

One of the most notable conversions remains to be mentioned. You may be sure that none could have startled the community more. The reader is already familiar with a gentle, sweet winning influence for some time leading that way, and will not be so much surprised as our neighborhood at large. They will not soon forget the evening. The interest was culminating to its intensest solemnity. The large audience were listening as for their lives. The young preacher, lifted as preachers are sometimes lifted upon the demands of the crisis and borne onward in wonderful eloquence by a power, not of earth, was pleading mightily that all would forsake the unsatisfying ways of sin and yield themselves to the saving mercies of Jehovah. Suddenly that same rough figure we

have seen so often before, boldly rises from behind a pillar of the house and speaks aloud :

"Mr. Weston, just wait a moment. Here's a poor devil that wants to know the way. You needn't exhort any longer. Surely there's no one here such a fool that he wouldn't be a Christian if he could. Just tell me how to become a Christian and I'll do it in ten minutes—so help me God! But when you undertake to save Tom Gaines, you undertake a big job. I tell you at the start that I am the wickedest wretch that ever breathed. How will your Gospel do in that case? If this crowd knew all, you would kill me sooner than pray for me. But pray for me first and then you may kill me and welcome. Catherine May yonder, has done what she can for me. She knows all and yet she wants me saved! If it had not been for her, I would never have darkened these doors nor thought of heaven. I've been here crouching in the shadows three nights, and I like the speeches you're making. You've almost got me to dreaming that your Jesus cares for Tom Gaines. I thought nobody cared for me but Catherine. You said that He too feels for sorrowing parents. Then you said that He loves little children and softens their dying and takes them up to heaven. If that's all so, then I'm on His side! You talk so much like Catherine May that I'd like to hear you talk some more. I want to be quit of sin. I would be willing to get better if I knew how. It seems like a hopeless undertaking; but you said it wasn't.

Now just tell me how to be saved—no shuffling—no beating around the bush; but something right to the point, something to take hold of, and I'll try, if I have to grapple with all the devils in hell. Put it on heavy and strong. Remember you are dealing with no ordinary case. Sweat me as much as you please. Tighten the screws till you wrench sin out of me. I'm ready to go through anything!"

Poor man, he thought there was something to suffer, some penance to be imposed, before God would save him. Tom was not alone in this. The whole congregation were amazed, but there was no confusion. Weston saw that the Gospel could be preached through this scene, perhaps more powerfully than from the pulpit. The faith of believers was moving up into confidence that the grace of Christ would avail even for Tom Gaines. On one face alone was lurking a cynical expression of contempt. Why I looked at that evil face in such an hour, I could not have told.

The minister used his opportunity for proclaiming, in all its fulness, a gratuitous salvation. He was glad to meet it as an extreme case. There was nothing to be imposed; nothing to be endured; redemption is free, the love of Christ a present reality, pardon instantaneous for all who want it for Jesus' sake.

"I knew you would not understand the case"—interposed the rough questioner. "All that would do very well for common sinners. But

suppose the worst case in the world; imagine him just as bad as anybody in your penitentiaries or anybody that was ever hanged. Then what's to be done? What would you say to such, Mr. Preacher?"

The minister showed that all degrees of guilt were canceled upon the same terms; that the crimson and scarlet were no barrier to forgiveness; that the merits of Christ were infinite and covered every conceivable case. He spoke of the thief on the cross, nailed up there so that he could do nothing; unable to move; incapable of performing a single ceremony; yet pardoned in the midst of his utter vileness and helplessness, and saved by the Master. The attention of Gaines was riveted. I saw the same sneer upon Jake Askin's face and an apparent attempt to secure the eye of Gaines. Was he anxious to interfere with the deep interest exhibited by Gaines in these glorious truths?

Weston did not apologize for sin. He showed its dark enormity, vile, ruinous, hateful in the sight of God, and damning. One sin deserved an eternity of woe. The Law was not forgotten.

"That's the way to talk it," assented Gaines. "I would be willing to agonize a thousand years in hell if thereby I could be cleansed from what I have done and be all right."

"Neither that, nor millions of years, could atone for your guilt," said Weston earnestly. "Neither in time nor eternity can you ever expiate it yourself. There is an easier way than that. Your

self-abasement to-day will not save you. There is an easier way. Jesus has done all that needs to be done. It is a matter between you and Jesus. He calls you; He loves you; He will take you just as you are."

"No, no, not just as I am. I like you Mr. Weston, and you must not deceive me"—protested the earnest man.

Mother Howe had been biting her lips but she could not keep the Scripture back. Low but loud enough to be heard, she quoted the old familiar words—"Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

"What is it that the old woman said," asked Gaines. "It seemed to sound very sweet."

And then God's messenger took up the precious invitation and explained the gracious meaning and pictured a present Savior as offering rest from guilt, from the fear of hell, and from the lashings of an angry conscience. Giving Himself, Jesus gives all that the penitent soul craves after.

"Then I take Him"! cried the strange man. And here let me record my belief that he did take Him: took this Jesus as his personal Savior simply and implicitly upon His word. Let me hasten to record my testimony to this confidence before I tell what is yet to be told—before the old preacher's soul was shaken as it had to be shaken. In those moments a wonderful change came over the rough features. The man looked civilized.

The neighborhood was astounded. An earthquake could have aroused them but little more. The defiant sinner, the sneering misanthrope, the bitter Tom Gaines, becoming a Christian! But why not? Does not the blood of Christ cleanse from all sin? Why do men limit the grace of God? Let me hasten to establish my own faith before the hour of trial comes!

By request of Gaines himself, the Session before which he was to appear, met in private. Catherine alone, by his own wish, came with him. Noble woman; I saw then a joy upon her which seemed to be mating her with the glorified intelligences above. There are sometimes applications for membership in the church of God, which test severely the faith of Sessions. Placed there as a guard upon her purity and jealous for her honor, they are approached by persons of such wickedness in the near past that it is difficult to believe the coarse hard nature changed in an hour and the inveterate sinner become a child of God. Catherine alone seemed confident and satisfied and full of peace. How little we dreamed of what she knew!

"Will you do all the talking that is to be done for awhile, Mr. Weston? I cannot talk to that old man yet,"—said Gaines, pointing to me.

"My friend," said my co-pastor, "you are taking a solemn step. For many years you have lived a sinner, and now I believe you want to live a Christian."

"Yes, that's the way to put it exactly—and to die a Christian. Sin hasn't paid me. It's lied to me. It's fooled me. It's served me worse than that. I'm not going to live long; but while I live I want to love my Savior and honor Him."

"You speak of Him as your Savior; what do you mean by that?"

"You know that thief upon the cross you told about. I mean what he meant while he listened to the words of Jesus. I mean what he meant when he did nothing but just believe what Jesus said. I mean what he meant while taking the promise for granted and spending his few hours trusting and then dying in that trust. I want to go away just like he did."

"You believe then that Jesus has heard your prayers and forgiven your sins?"

"I seem to hang myself up by the side of that thief and believe it just like he did."

"Do you love this Savior who has done so much for you?"

"I loved my boy—I love your Jesus as I loved Sammy; and I love Him still better every time I think about it. Mean as I was towards others, I treated Jesus meaner than I ever treated anybody else. And He was kind to me through it all. Could I have gotten hold of the spear, I have no doubt I would have plunged it deeper than the Roman soldier did. And He kept on loving me. Oh, of course I love Him!"

"And now do you trust Him to keep you from sin hereafter?"

"I know nothing about it but what He says Himself. You remember how the old woman brought it in—'I will give you rest.' I want to rest from sin till I die. 'Give it?' That's the way it must come, or Tom Gaines will be Tom Gaines still. That's the hope, is it not, Catherine May?"

Her assent was so trustful and so assuring.

Weston said again—"You have been very bitter, Mr. Gaines, against your fellow man. Can you give up all that malevolence for Jesus' sake?"

"I am glad you did not ask me that last week. I would have cursed almost all of them but Catherine May. But you put it right. It's all for Jesus' sake. I don't know what to make of it, but when the love of Jesus crept in, the old hatred seemed to sneak out."

"And you want to come in among God's people as a part of God's Church, and in that way own Him before the world?"

"I can't say that I do. That's Catherine's notion, not mine. I told her better; told her all; that I'd never disgrace the Church with the carcass or name of Tom Gaines; nor will I do it now until I've told as black a tale as was ever heard by the ear of God."

I saw Lardner rise from his seat and come nearer the man. There had been a stern, hard look in the elder's face until now; but there

seemed to be a new awakening of interest and a softening of the lines about his month. What did it all mean?

"Lardner, will you stand just there—there between the old man and me? Gentlemen, I am on my funeral march to the scaffold, and I choose to come by this way. The thief went to heaven from the cross; I want to go from the gallows. I'm tired hiding the truth. Concealment has not paid. It shall now all come out. Catherine didn't know whether I ought to tell it or not; but I couldn't bear to fool the Church of God. Gentlemen, you are thinking of taking an assassin to your communion!"

There could be no doubt that he meant what he said. A shudder passed over us all. All but Lardner. He seemed to be softening more and more. For the moment he interested me as much as Gaines.

"I have slain a fellow mortal with these hands, and I want to be sure that I'm a Christian and then satisfy the laws of men."

Lardner stepped forward and extended his hand as if for a friendly grasp. There was the same melting in his face as when he saw his son owning his Savior. What did it mean?

"I suspected your sincerity, Thomas, and my heart was steeled against you. But surely the grace of Christ is almighty. I have long believed you guilty of crime, but I could not prove it. I have watched and hoped to convict you at last.

I heard almost every word you uttered while you were walking the woods-path near your boy's grave and telling to the darkness the story of your wickedness. I was near you all the time, but failed to get direct facts sufficient to hang you. Here is a handkerchief found by myself near the pond where the fiendish deed was done. I was sure it was yours; I kept it as yours; but I could never prove it."

"It is mine," answered Gaines without hesitation. "It was one of my tools. It helped me to strangle him. Hide it from my eyes."

"But, Thomas," continued Lardner, "were it not for the mercy of Jesus, my dear son may have gone on to crimes just as dark. He was on his way. The goodness of God alone arrested him. The very same goodness has brought you to mourn for sin and to tell it. The crime was well concealed. It has baffled years of investigation on my part, and was not even suspected by the rest of the community. You would probably never have been found out. The confession, I believe to be a result of divine grace. As a fellow-sinner, trusting to the forgiveness of the same Savior, I give you the hand of fellowship."

"No, not yet. I knew all the time you didn't like me. But you are not the one whose hate I merit most, and whose pardon I am coveting now. I'm going to proclaim it all; and then tell me if I may count upon the forgiveness of my God. Now

stand aside, Lardner, and let me see the old man I have so deeply wronged."

What were they all doing? What kind of a drama were they acting? Perhaps I had begun to suspect. Perhaps my mind was partly dazed. I do not know. Lardner passed to one side and I looked into the murderer's eyes. There was an intensity of pity there I had never seen in mortal face before. Catherine came to me and placed her arm about my neck. She had never done so since her bright girlhood. Anson looked at me once and broke down in tears. What were they all trying to do? Was not this a Session meeting? The voice came to me as from a great distance in a dream:

"I murdered the old preacher's son. He was drowned by these hands. I held him beneath the waters until he breathed no more; and so carefully and deliberately as to leave no marks of violence upon him. I did it because, after my own boy died, I hated every father's joy. I did it because I hated God and wanted to spite Him for leaving me childless. I did it because I thought God would be spited worse by my injuring one of His ministers. And I did it because of a great lie that was told me by a bad man who wanted to incite me to the hellish deed. I want to go into the crowd outside the door one moment. Come along, Lardner, as a guard upon me, that no one may fear I will run from justice."

Oh my poor son Willie, would God I had died for thee, O Willie my son, my son! I see thee now, dripping, faded, blanched, as they brought thee from the pond. The child of many prayers and glowing hopes, given to God from the womb, dedicated to the Gospel ministry. It is all as fresh as yesterday. Your dear mother and your father mourned awhile and then gave thee up because God did it. I am glad that your mother passed away before she knew that you writhed and suffocated in the grasp of a murderer. Oh my Willie, so good, so true, so loving, so conscientious, so devout; my noble boy, my precious child; would God I had died for thee, my son, my son!

Did I speak all this aloud or not? Then Allen Anson knelt and prayed. The good man took me up and transported me to the presence of Jesus and of my sainted Willie. Submission came and I was myself again. I too knelt and prayed for Thomas Gaines. And then I was at peace. As we arose, I found that Gaines had entered and heard my petitions in his behalf. The giant was sobbing like a child. We saw another man carried in his strong arms as helplessly as an infant. He brought him and set him down before us. It was Jake Askins. He looked startled and afraid, but in that vice-like grasp he could not move.

"God bless that old man" —said Gaines. "He prays for the murderer of his child. I can believe in Christ easier now. Here is my fellow criminal. I bring him not to punish him—that's not my busi-

ness now; that's God's business. But I bring him that he may be known and deceive you no longer —this wonderfully holy man! Were it not for Jake Askins I don't believe I would ever have been a murderer. He excited me till I was wild. He told me that the preacher exulted in the death of my Sammy as a public rebuke of my sin, and openly gloried in it as an example of the divine judgments. He lied to me about many cruel, cruel words which had come from that old man's lips—words which I know those kind lips never uttered. I was driven into rage and struck back. I wanted the old man to know how it feels to lose a child. Poor old man! poor old man! I am so sorry now"

His harsh voice had become as soft as a woman's.

"After that deed of sin, Jake knew he had power over me and he used it like a tyrant—driving me to do his bidding in new villainy under constant threats of exposure. I've taken the exposure into my own hands and told the tale and broken his power. I do it for the good of the neighborhood before I die. I am trying to stop despising even him! Now Tom Gaines goes into the custody of the law. I go trusting for salvation to the One who talked of Paradise to a thief!"

Old John Phales spoke for the first time. "You can loosen your grip, Thomas, and let Askins go. We hereby cite him to appear before this Session for trial at such time as we may appoint. It is

time that the Church of God should be more zealous in her discipline!"

Jake Askins felt the strong grasp relax and he slunk away.

I went to Gaines and gave him my hand. I held in mine the fingers that had slain my precious Willie. They touched mine as gently and tenderly as the hand of Willie's mother. I believed that God had forgiven him and I would forgive him also.

Ah, Catherine, Catherine, I am thinking that yours after all was by far the heaviest burden to bear. Yet there she stood with a holy serenity upon her; calm and peaceful; her sweet countenance beaming with gladness—looking like one of the angels that rejoice in the presence of God over a repenting soul. Thou hast known of this crime, and stood alone; and borne up; and labored on; and led to Christ the man who has injured you the most of all. I thought of the girl and boy, of their innocent childhood together, their plays among my flowers, their rambles through the forest, their faces near together reading from my books, their growing up with one thought and one joy, their coming to Christ the same hour, their admission to the communion table the same beautiful Sabbath. God works in wondrous ways. Willie the sooner in heaven; the hardened sinner saved; Catherine May but the purer and holier and more loving. How she stood through that terrible after-time, I could not tell, were it not that

my story is a story of marvelous grace. As the Session went from the door, seeing nothing, knowing nothing of the great void in her life, she came to the childless old man again, laid her head for a moment upon his bosom, raised her lips and touched them to his, and then went out into the dark. No word was uttered. I heard no sigh; I felt no sob. But I knew none but the hand of God could have written so full of beautiful sentiment and sweet promises and womanly deed and cheerful hope, the great blank page of thy lonely life, my daughter, my precious daughter!

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE ISHMAELITES.

They are confederate against thee; the tabernacles of Edom and the Ishmaelites; of Moab and the Hagarenes.—*Eighty-third Psalm.*

IT was feared that public excitement, consequent upon the confession of Gaines, might cause interruption to the spiritual interest among us. It would be difficult to portray the attitude of popular sentiment at this juncture. There was indignation; there was astonishment; there was the spirit of vengeance; there was pity. Some claimed to have suspected him all the time. Some doubted his sanity. Some thought that condign punishment should speedily follow. Others inclined to mercy. Some contended that his conversion was feigned in order to win sympathy and escape the gallows. Others argued that this could not be the case, since he had been in no danger until the grace of God had led to the acknowledgment of his guilt and brought him to be his own accuser. The Marstons and Flukes were very happy — holding that the apostate

church was harboring a felon; countenancing iniquity; and using its influence against the peace of society. They enjoyed the opportunity offered for branding the ordained ministers as the abettors of crime, charging them with openly and officially palliating the outrageous murder and making themselves accessory after the fact to the deed of blood. Even the old father, they said, was inclined to condone the assassination of his own son.

As is frequently the case, the evil one overleaped himself in his efforts to use this sad affair to the detriment of the church. Listened to by a few persons, Satan's agents grew bold and ventured upon unkind criticism of Catherine May. They knew her popularity and her usefulness in all good work, and a thrust at her was a thrust at the church. Jeremiah Fluke, backed by the women of both families, was grievously scandalized that any professed lady should have been so intimate with this hardened sinner; seen with him again and again; on many occasions paying him the most marked attentions in public places; helping him to take care of that idolatrous grave in the woods; and sending choice viands to the wolf's den when she had never given their children one morsel. It was distressing that, notwithstanding the discovery of his abominable reprobacy, she should now appear as his apologist and even visit the criminal in his prison.

Ah, my Catherine, how little these poor, foolish people knew of your soul's history, and of the

true spirit of your loved Master, who prayed for His own murderers even while the cruel nails were driven!

The criticism worked its own defeat. The sympathies for our dear girl were warm and tender, and the community would not bear any assault upon her. They began to talk abroad of the power of grace that could reach the obdurate Gaines, and of the beauty of that feminine piety which could labor so faithfully for the salvation of the man who had bruised the noble woman's heart so terribly. The approved devotion of Catherine, her wonderful self-control through all her seasons of trial, her deeds of love while love lay wounded and bleeding, called the popular mind more mightily than ever to the work of the Spirit among us. The great Adversary had outgeneraled himself.

And the work in the church went on. God was so unmistakably present that such agitations could cause but a ripple in the victorious march of redeeming grace. Influences which would shake a church to its foundations in times of spiritual declension, will hardly be noticed when we are abiding under the shadow of the Almighty. On the mountain summit, the storms of earth sound dull and broken in the fair valleys below. God at hand, the world and the flesh and the devil droop into feebleness.

"Ask these Christian people to pray for me. Tell them to plead with their Savior not to pass

me by. I have done them wrong. I have reviled them. But now, oh now I want an interest in their petitions! Don't let them forget my unworthy name." Such was the earnest entreaty of a man who had been one of our church-critics all his days. It was his delight for years to detect the foibles of God's children and hide from the truth behind their short-comings. Fluke and his friends had encouraged his folly and helped him to unearth the faults of the church as an opiate for his own conscience. Again Almighty grace had proved too strong and brought this man to beg for the supplications of the very people whose Christianity he had doubted.

"I want a home among the lovers of Jesus. I cannot go alone. The fellowship of Christians is just what I need; my soul craves the companionship and the recognized ties of brotherhood. The visible Church, with its visible ordinances and banded membership, looks to me now very attractive and gloriously divine. I never saw its beauty before; its needed restraints, its gracious encouragements, its helpful bands of love. In His organized Church, God seems to have supplied just what my redeemed soul longs after." The speaker was soliciting a place in our communion as a favor and a privilege. "I know," he said, "that my poor name can add nothing to her grandeur and power. Unworthy of a place within her pale, I come and ask the humblest position among her hewers of wood and drawers of water." The

reader will remember this man as one fully in sympathy with Darby Plym's assault upon all ecclesiastical organizations, and one who, depending upon his morality, believed he could work his own way heavenward as well outside of the Church as in it. When he began to show an interest in these services, Askins and others of that 'community' gathered around and tried to enlist him in an avowed support of their principles. The wisdom of God had made him wiser. "I am too weak," he said, "to stand by myself. I require all the means God has given to sustain and strengthen in living the Christian life. I clearly recognize that body of which Christ is the head; and I want to live and to die a part of it."

It was not, however, to be expected that such successes could continue without the interposition of new obstructions by the enemy. Diversion from the main interest of a revival by the rival efforts of less orthodox partizans, is a common strategem of the emissaries of the pit. It was, therefore, no surprise to me to hear of a series of meetings announced as about to begin at the school-house. A peculiar sect had been operating in our county for a year or two, claiming to be some great thing, loud in their zeal, and, in certain quarters, attracting considerable crowds. Their watch-word was war to the death upon other denominations; boldly avowing themselves to be the only Church; and proclaiming, without a blush, that there was no salvation beyond their own nar-

row pale. They seemed to count largely upon the principle that the more ostentatious men's pretentions to a monopoly of the truth, the more proselytes they will secure. Nobody marveled when we found that the Marstons and Flukes and their restless squad of malcontents, were favoring these raiders and encouraging their opposition meeting. Although this new sect was distinctively in conflict with opinions previously avowed by our neighbors, yet the latter seemed ready to make common cause with any crusade against the sacred beliefs of evangelical Churches.

I have noticed this as the usual history of errorists. Confederation appears easy against an orthodox foe. Whatever the differences among themselves, they rally under any banner in their common hatred of the truth. This little modern sect anticipated the support of Jeremiah and his admirers, and they were not disappointed. In order to accomplish a common object, the schismatical defenders of the doctrine of entire holiness appeared to coalesce without difficulty with even the laxest pretenders to piety. The transition from one to the other is easier than would be supposed. They all seemed prepared for any expedient, any rallying cry, any bond of union, by which to assail established ecclesiastical systems. Extremes meet. Pretentious holiness shakes hands with pretentious liberalism. They find it easy to unite in the cry—The temple of God, the temple of God are we! And there is always ma-

terial in every community to be impressed by such pretensions.

Another tendency in our human nature helps to secure this modern sect its degree of popularity; and they know how to use this tendency very shrewdly to the accomplishment of their designs. Wherever the pure Gospel is preached, there will be found running parallel with it cravings for an easy religion, a looking around for worldly substitutes, and recourse to the forms of piety in order to quiet conscience and let down the demands of the law to weak adulterations of good works. Alongside of Christianity will always be found arrogant counterfeits. The mind, ill at ease, but turning away in its folly from the beautiful simplicity of the Scriptural terms of salvation, human invention is taxed in every age to find some plausible scheme by which Deity may be propitiated and heaven won. There will be loose systems while sin and conscience last. God's purer and stricter Churches must be content to endure the friction and hear their challenges until the Lord shall come. Unitarianism and rationalism afflict the East; the West, also, will have her dilutions of saving truth. We need not hope to bury them yet. In some shape they have always hung about the wheels of God's chariot. We may expect to encounter these emasculated forms of Christianity as long as our unsanctified human nature lusts for some other way than God's.

Great precaution was taken to advertise their preacher. He was a man of marvelous ability and wonderful acquaintance with the Scriptures. There had never been such a preacher in the county. He would soon throw all other preachers into the shade. On inquiry, I found this to be the usual expedient of this narrow sect. All their preachers were extraordinary preachers. However illiterate, rude or imbecile, they were published abroad as prodigies. That they were to stand up for their preachers and laud them under all circumstances, was a policy well understood. While charging other Churches with being priest-ridden and kept in slavery by ecclesiastics, perhaps no little sect was ever in more complete intellectual subjection to their ministers. As often as they changed their preacher, you would notice that they changed their mental and moral views.

And yet they boasted great independence of thought and action; were in thrall to no human authority; scouted the trammels of a dead theology. Mr. Baptow commenced his first sermon with an imposing parade of the free thought of his sect. He strode theatrically down to the pulpit desk, struck his right fist impressively upon the shuddering Bible, and with all the force of his deep voice threw out the thunderous sentence —"This is my creed!" It was well done. His little uncultured audience were electrified. They were henceforth prepared to accept any dogma he cared to advance. For was not the Bible his creed?

He asserted that he *knew* he was right for he took the Word of God as his only guide. They felt the force of the argument and admitted that in that case he *must* be right. All other denominations were bound hand and foot by human traditions and the deliverances of councils. He broke loose from all such restraints and did his own thinking. And they became tacitly willing for him to do their thinking too. For he persuaded them that they were doing their own thinking while he was thinking for them. Although a creed is nothing more than an intelligible statement of what one believes, the preacher labored to possess his hearers with the nightmare of a necessary and diabolical antagonism between all creeds and the Scriptures. Of course this was a smart and studied blow at all Churches honest enough to avow their beliefs; and as such it gained the favorable attention of all the cavilers and sore-heads in the community.

The preacher contended that the Church had the right to ask but one question as condition for membership—Do you believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God? As every body, moral or immoral, penitent or impenitent, believed that, he knew that these easy terms would be very acceptable to the unregenerate heart and make his sect popular. Men may deny every other doctrine of the Bible. Arian or Pelagian or Socinian or Universalist or Mormon, the whole herd of heretics could find welcome by affirmative answer to the

fact of the Sonship of Jesus of Nazareth. This was liberal indeed. This opened the door very wide. This was to be the broad popular Church. This was to swallow up all the rest. In its great plethoric maw, it could absorb and digest anything!

On this ground Elder Baptow claimed that his Church was the most charitable of all. He was generously willing that everybody should believe just what they pleased so they only pleased to believe as he did. Was not that charitable? On these terms he plead for union. All the multitudinous sects were to come together and form one grand consolidated Apostolic Church. That would be glorious. That would bring the millennium. It was the easiest thing in the world. It would only be necessary for the people to come to his platform, and it would be done! He waxed eloquent on union. Union was to save the world. Union was to Christianize all creation. But union meant union with him. Was not that liberal? His arms reached out to embrace everybody. His Gospel net was capacious enough to inclose all sorts of fishes; leviathans and minnows, mermaids and sharks, sea serpents and slippery eels; white fish, blue fish, black fish, devil fish and all.

But somehow the Elder was denouncing everybody. While bewailing the strifes and divisions in the Church of God and deploring the spirit of sectarianism, the staple of these very sermons was vituperation. He was everlastingly belaboring

somebody. Surely none of the hated sects had developed such bellicose powers. Not one single discourse could succeed in reaching its close without a spurt of venom. This was zeal for God. This was ministerial smartness. Because of this, his admirers felt that he was a very able man.

There are certain doctrines of the Bible which can never be popular. They were never designed to be. Sin is popular. Self-esteem is popular. Human conceit of its own ability, is popular. The desire to hold our salvation in our own hands and independent of God's sovereignty, is popular. Truths which cut up human confidence and human merit by the roots, can never be palatable to the multitudes on the broad road, for such truths are too humbling. Against these mighty old doctrines the Elder and his guerrillas were especially bitter. He could not mention Augustin or Calvin without a malediction. The Presbyterian Church was his antipathy. Firm, staunch, stately, symmetrical, unshaken; God's rock-based bulwark against error through all the ages; his fidgetty sect hated her as it would hate its mortal foe. Her reverence for all the Scriptures, her Sabbath-keeping, her fidelity in indoctrinating her children and making them proof against wily proselyters, her sturdy defence of the faith once delivered to the saints was treason to the loud pretensions and silly sophistries of these religious banditti. And thus the Elder and his little clan went on fighting. They were either belligerent or nothing. So they

threw out their bait and fed the leviathans and minnows, the white fish, the blue fish, the black fish, the devil fish and all, on the garbage gathered from the sewers and drains and cess-pools of other Churches.

I should not do justice to this portrait if I omitted their zeal for a name. This little bantling of the nineteenth century must have a name. It was a matter of life and death. It had been long discussed. There had been many differences. The mighty intellects of their vast constellations of great men, had been taxed to the utmost to bring forth a name. The name was more important than their beliefs. The name was to demolish the sects. All ancient landmarks were to be done away and the history of redemption to start anew, under the spell of an omnipotent name. Various designations were adopted for awhile, and then cast aside without act of Legislature. While these transcient appellations lasted, it was persecution and sacrilege to call them by any other. Those who desired to give no offence, were kept bewildered by the multiplicity of aliases.

Finally after much controversy and great travail of soul, they settled upon the title—Ishmaelites. They chose this for weighty considerations. In the first place, it was thoroughly Scriptural. They had certainly found it somewhere within the pages of the Bible. This was an important advantage. It would place them above many of

the sects. It would hereafter be deemed an unpardonable affront to speak of them otherwise than exclusively as Ishmaelites. In the second place, the other Churches had been tracing their organization far back to the times of Abraham, while they themselves had been endeavoring with mighty searchings to locate the origin of their fraternity somewhere amid the unrecorded uncertainties of Pentecost. This little modern sect became ambitious of ancient dates. They began to covet the notice of the Patriarchs. It was their general policy to slight the Old Testament and decry its authority; but when it subserved a purpose, they did not hesitate to use it. Now it would assist them to a name and an argument. Other Churches dated back to the birth of Isaac; they would go further still, for was not Ishmael older than Isaac? The sacred name of Ishmaelites was the very thing. In the third place, the Bible had said, "And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man and every man's hand against him." They intended to be just like him and raise their hand against every man, and try to get every man's hand raised against them, and then they could raise the cry of persecution. In the fourth place, regardless of material, they were especially desirous of numbers and a parade of strength; and had not the angel said unto Hagar, "I will multiply thy seed exceedingly that it shall not be numbered for multitude?" The appropriateness was wonderful. In the fifth place, when Ishmael was in

great stress of body and soul, he was saved by water. Nothing but water could have met the demands of the occasion. To him water was everything. True, it was only a bottle full, and they would have liked it better if it had been a pond full; but they had gotten used to the unfortunate fact that the Bible would not always supply them the quantity of water preferred. The fault was in Hagar who took the water to the boy instead of the boy to the water, and applied it to him instead of him to it. But the great point remained, there would have been no Ishmaelites had it not been for water. Here was a clear case of salvation by water. And henceforth this little modern sect, white fish and blue fish and black fish and cuttle fish and devil fish and all, disported themselves most heroically beneath the liquid wave and brandished their thorny fins in the triumphant claims of great antiquity.

Rome, seated upon her seven hills, parades her seven sacraments, and, step by step, expects through them to climb to heaven. She understands the lust of the carnal heart for forms and ceremonies, and she panders to that lust through a gorgeous ritual. Ishmaelism, looking out upon her shoreless domain of waters, simplified the whole thing and staked salvation upon one rite. Sacramentalism would still save, but there was a shorter cut than through seven. Immersion would cover the whole case. Heaven was an island and there was no approach but by water. True, they

observed the Lord's Supper also, but it was of secondary importance and only an ornamental appendage to the other. It was of such little importance that anybody could administer it, whether ordained or not. They thought far more of the water than the blood. In order to the remission of sins, obedience was as essential as faith. Mere mental assent was faith; immersion was obedience. Man's works must help to save him, but his works must begin like the life movements of musquitoes, under water. It did not matter so much about his general conduct and character in other respects, his daily life, his observance of the Lord's day, his common honesty, if he only obeyed in taking properly to the water. Bible obedience was an aqueous obedience. In the estimation of some, the more disagreeable the immersion, the more meritorious it would be. If winter were rigorous and the ice thick, if the pond were muddy and the purifying element decidedly impure, then the greater would be the sacrifice, and the greater perhaps would be the efficacy. Some felt honored above their brethren because called to obey through such brave self-denial. Under no circumstances would they dare to defer. Death, short of the water, was perdition.

Elder Baptow and his adherents were acting consistently in arranging the time of their meeting. The plan of every campaign was aggressive. They expected to flourish by opposition to God's Churches. The successes of others seemed to

madden them. When the Holy Spirit moved upon any community, they were always on the alert to intermeddle and secure a diversion to the water. Their only way of recognizing the personality and office-work of the Holy Ghost was by a persistent and organized antagonism whenever His presence was felt. If the Ineffable Spirit according to the promise had not come down upon the heads of the disciples in a form unacceptable to these Ishmaelites and if the Savior had not called that a baptism, then perhaps the dislike which this little sect felt to the Third Person of the Trinity would not have been so manifest. They never forgave His descent in the form of an effusion, and it was always seen that whenever the blessed Paraclete was poured out upon any people, these doughty warriors became restless and active and more envenomed. The waters began to cast up mire and dirt. They planned opposition meetings. They tried to entrap the wounded, as they were called; punctured consciences looking around after sedatives for conviction; distressed souls ready to be misled by specious proffers of peace. It was therefore no surprise when we heard that the presence of God among us had provoked the appointment of rival services at the School House.

CHAPTER XXX.

GOOD OUT OF EVIL.

And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.—*Revelation xii : 15.*

STANDING here alone and childless, but not sad, upon the farther verge of life, there are few sweeter memories floating to me from the soft azure of the past, than of those comely hours in our early wedded years when we were bringing our darling babes one after another as God gave them to us, and consecrating them to the Good Master in His own appointed way. I can think of no act of worship in all those brighter days, which I recall to day with greater satisfaction. Surely there can be found few words of richer and deeper import to the parent's soul than those that fell so tenderly and winningly from the lips of the Lover of children—Of such is the kingdom of God. In six sunny seasons of privilege we came to the church with each little new-born lamb and placed it by faith upon the Savior's bosom and seemed to listen to those sympathizing accents—Of such is the

kingdom of God. The God of the covenant never failed us. I love Him the more to-day because He loved my children. And I love His Church the better because there was a recognized place within her pale for my little unconscious babes. Over each cherub sleeper within its snowy crib—there in the corner—there by the side of its mother—I look back and seem to see the gracious utterance distinctly written—Of such is the kingdom of God. Thinking of them all now in glory, tarrying but a few days and then certainly to see them again, I would not give those halcyon memories of their early consecration for all that the world has left!

Said an excellent minister of another faith to me in a pleasant candid heart-hour; "Those who believe that they find infant baptism within the Bible pages, should not be abused for holding to it very tenaciously. There is something in it which appeals warmly to a felt need in the Christian parent's soul. So sensibly do I feel this that at a fixed time after the birth of every child, my wife and myself observe a regular form of dedication around the family altar. Now I know that ours is a human rite, for I devised it myself—devised it to satisfy the demands of my own bosom. But you who think you have a divine institution, given on purpose to meet the pleas of this parental yearning, are not to be blamed for requiring arguments very stout and strong and convincing before you consent to surrender it."

I see our Willie in his little long white dress, pure and spotless as motherly hands could make it. But his robes are whiter now. I see him there in front of the pulpit that holy morning, his dimpled arms around the mother's neck, his tiny fingers toying with her hair, his soft cheek laid against hers. I wonder if there are caresses still in glory. Ere the glory came, the efficient agency of the Holy Spirit would be needed to new-create the soul and clear it of every taint; this hope we had, and the promise we claimed, in that hallowed sign and seal. My faith in God was never stronger. I had no fear in that hour that my child would die unregenerate. The little fellow was as composed and still as if he knew what it meant. The hour was coming when he would know. He understands it all now, and there before the throne he thanks God for his father's and mother's faith. The day would certainly dawn when he would take these vows upon himself and rejoice in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. And we enjoyed it in anticipation. The few sparkling drops of the element were enough. Even in the one little transparent globule of clear water that lingered like Hermon's dew upon the baby brow, I saw what God meant as clearly as in an ocean full, and I felt my confidence strengthening in the final purity of the soul through Jehovah's sovereign power. God needed no inconvenient ponds and elaborate tanks to save His child. Human hands would need something like that to drown my boy. For him at least,

immersion meant death. And so, in the history of hydra-headed heresies, ritualism in its stealthy forms has again and again meant death. And I say it to-day both in sadness and in triumph—Better, a thousand times better, the literal drowning of our darling Willie in water; new-born, trustful, ready to go; than the drowning in sacramentalism of the true spirituality of the religion of the cross. Tom Gaines is not the only murderer whose weapon has been immersion!

In the progress of the Revival, as on many former occasions, I had been noticing that the large majority of persons embracing Christ were children of the covenant. Even where an occasional adult was to be baptized, we usually found that it was only necessary to look back a generation or two to trace the line of faith to godly progenitors.

In one case, we sought for full four removes; but there, sure enough, we came upon a praying mother in Israel who pressed her way to church through the howlings of a storm and over the unbelief of her husband and gave her child to the faithful Promiser. Thus, day after day, we saw the grace of God following in the line of pious descent. In the Psalms, we are told of the One who "setteth the solitary in families," and, in Malachi, we learn He does it that He "may seek a godly seed." Presbyterianism with its pure doctrines and Bible morals, is a God-given heritage from noble ancestry, handed down through household baptisms and fireside supplications from father to son and

perpetuated in indestructible vitality and immortal youth as long as pious sires shall be known.

The Ishmaelitish skirmishers understood this well and made it their strategic point. If they could loosen this household law, if they could cloud the promises and break these lines of God's covenanted blessings, it would be easier to make inroads upon the families of other denominations and win our children from the truth. They hated the doctrine of the covenant with mortal bitterness.

Although for a thousand years after the death of Christ, infant baptism as a divine institution was never once called in question, and although until that time all immersionists immersed their babes wherever that form of the rite was practiced at all; yet these pirates of the modern water-war were willing to debar themselves from this common privilege of all believers and defraud their own offspring of their rights, in order that a larger and clearer field might be gained for operating upon the children of other Churches. If one of Presbyterian parentage could be proselyted to their communion, it was a cause of greater jubilation than if a score of young Ishmaelites should be buried beneath the liquid wave. Every such pervert was published far and wide as another harbinger of the Ishmaelitish millennium.

Elder Baptow was therefore consistent in aiming his heaviest onsets against the Baptismal rights of the children. They were left entirely outside of the promises until old enough as adults to embrace

Ishmaelism and choose the regulated quantity of water. For the Savior's beautiful words, Of such is the kingdom of God, they virtually gave over all those years to another than Christ, and, in effect, substituted words like these—Of such provisionally is the kingdom of Satan. The fold of the Good Shepherd was a fold for the old sheep but not for the lambs. The Elder was mighty in ridicule; able to demolish venerable Churches with a joke; potent in wry faces and a few hacknied phrases of Scripture. All his puissant Theological wit was concentrated upon the fretting brats of the sects; the poor innocents forced to the font, fighting against the unconscionable sprinkler, and shrieking in vigorous protest. The picture was heart-rending. Mr. Baptow was too much overborne by his tremendous logic to rejoice that in the ordination of God this simple painless rite had taken the place of one admittedly divine, yet one of pain and blood; under which bloody rite, for many centuries, every eight days-old infant had entered the Church of God with suffering and cries.

There was always some representative of the rival meeting over at ours, taking notes upon sermon and worship in order to make formal report to the invincible Baptow. At their next assembling there would be the expected reply interspersed with the usual amount of the jocular. With his partizans, this passed for great talent. In comparison, the preaching over at the church was dull and stupid and feeble. Thus they rattled

on through a week. We heard with sadness of the irreverence in their meetings. With its ludicrous jibes and silly anecdotes, the pulpit contributed its levity to the pews. There was no solemnity anywhere. This pleased the worldling and lifted the gloom of eternity from the restless conscience. It was very entertaining to certain tastes. As worship, it was but a masquerade of it.

Were these things not a part of current history and very common in some unfortunate sections of the land, I should have rebelled in my old age against recording them. Oh my God! the souls of men hanging over the abyss of woe; sin abounding; the curse impending above its thousands; and our fellow travelers to eternity cheated out of their immortal hopes by these painted counterfeits of Christianity! It is enough to make angels weep to see poor fallen human nature flattered into carnal security by a suicidal dependence upon empty forms, while God is saying through His Son—Ye must be born again! The pools are invoked, the streams are disturbed, the baptisteries are waded, the water is deified, while the solemn voice still rings from above the fogs—Ye must be born again. It is lamentable to hear of the travesties of pulpit ministration, the burlesques of Gospel, the caricatures of regeneration, while the evening with Nicodemus still reiterates that unrepealed Verily, Verily, to the ages. The old preacher sometimes wishes he could spend the remainder of his days far away from the hollow voices which tell of ashes instead of

manna, and which would if possible deceive the very elect. But our Western climes must have their burdens as well as the Eastern. The hour is near at hand when by these ears the foolish din shall be heard no more.

I did not see that Weston was disturbed. He went on preaching and praying as if there were no Ishmaelites in the world. Every expedient was tried to seduce or irritate him out of the proprieties of his high calling. Sermons were reported to him; personal allusions were made at the School-House and conveyed to his ears; there were misrepresentations of his words and his work; the Confession of Faith was taken into their pulpit, garbled, denounced, and its friends defied for a defence. Our young pastor pressed on with his labors as if utterly oblivious of these petty trifles and wholly absorbed in the one glorious cause. And God was with us and owned the pure Gospel more and more.

Notwithstanding constant sensational efforts to draw off our congregations, we saw no diminution in the attendance. Perhaps a few of the lighter and more frivolous were enticed away, but they were not missed. Out of this floating material we heard of a few converts being gathered now and then, and of their being immersed in a cattle pond not far from the church. These immersions were advertised far and near, but they attracted the attention of only the curious and profane; especially of those who went to be amused with laughable attitudes and indecorous vestments. I regretted to hear of

this. With the greatest respect for good people who honestly differ as to the scriptural mode of baptism, I sincerely wish it were possible for their administration of it to be with a dignity and decency befitting the honor of Christ.

When Elder Baptow had signally failed in all other attempts to secure Mr. Weston's notice and interrupt his work, he called a conference of his little clique, and out of their collective wisdom came to my colleague the following communication:

"Dear Sir: You are constantly preaching sentiments which are a direct assault upon the truths held sacred by the infallible Church of the Ishmaelites. By such attacks, you force us to defend ourselves. We would have preferred to be let alone; now no course is left us but to challenge you to a public discussion of the questions pending between us. I hold myself ready to prove to the satisfaction of the entire community that your sect is not a church; that sprinkling is not baptism; that your prayers for the Holy Spirit are fanaticism; that creeds are horribly bad; and that immersion alone avails for the remission of sins. If you will agree, I will meet you in your services any night, ventilating your pretensions and showing that Ishmaelism is the only route to heaven. As you already have a large congregation, it will be mutually advantageous to hold the debate over there. Jeremiah Fluke and Jacob Askins will make all necessary arrangements. Awaiting an early answer, I am very respectfully and disputatiously yours,

CAMEL BAPTOW."

The pugnacious Elder is awaiting that early answer still. It had been ostentatiously announced that the challenge was given, and the little band of

raiders over at the School House were in anxious expectancy of the famous debate. Controversy had achieved mighty triumphs for the truth. Controversy was the great engine of all reformations. Controversy was going to overthrow the Old Stone Church. Controversy was certain to revolutionize the neighborhood. On the victorious march of controversy, Ishmaelism was bound to take the world. The popular young pastor would soon be overwhelmed by the indomitable Baptow and be compelled to hide his diminished head like Knox and Calvin before him!

Weston kept on preaching the grand old saving doctrines, and persuading souls to Christ. About every important matter, he had always before consulted his senior; but as a singular thing, he never mentioned this note either to me or to the Session or to anybody. I could never have known of it but for the brave rumors from the camp of the Ishmaelites. They were a busy hive, and there was a continued buzzing and whetting of stings. Old and young had turned polemics. The great debate would bring them notoriety and secure the ear of the county. Knowing from painful experience and repeated failures, his inability to interest even his own people very long with his exceedingly narrow round of vapid Theology, the Elder caught at this opportunity to advertise himself and his little wares to the State at large. As the illustrious debater, the people would be willing to hear him serve up his paucity of subjects and of ideas again and

again. Let victory incline to whatever side it might, controversy could not result otherwise than advantageously to Elder Baptow and his admirers. In ecclesiastical character, there was absolutely nothing to lose.

Not a single echo back to this bold stroke of high emprise! The cruel Weston took no notice of the challenge or the challenger, and from that day I noticed that the prestige of these chivalrous Ishmaelites began to flicker and wane.

God rules marvelously and mightily in bringing good out of evil. On the part of some of our members, there had hitherto existed a culpable indifference on the subject of infant baptism. There were some not clearly convinced of its validity; others, although recognizing its Scriptural authority, could not see what good it would do the unconscious child; and others, for various insufficient reasons, had simply neglected the ordinance. This was a sad thing for the spirituality of the church; and there was danger of its growing upon us. The Ishmaelitish agitation and the Ishmaelitish spirit exhibited, aroused in these persons a new desire to examine the grounds of their Church's polity; and a candid examination did not fail of its usualeffects.

"I have sinned against God and against my children," said one of the mothers among us. "I cannot rest until this great wrong is righted. My daughter is now eleven years old. I have owned to her my neglect of duty. I have told her of the promises, and she wants to come side by side with

her baby brother and claim the boon of a parent's faith to be exercised in her behalf as under the covenant. Oh, brethren, have I forfeited this right entirely and defrauded my child for ever?"

We believed not, and we reassured her upon this returning sense of duty. The daughter gladly consenting, we could not stand in the way of the children's coming together upon the mother's revived faith, and receiving the privilege to which they were born. This called the attention of the Session and the church to the little girl in God's own way. They prayed for her as it had become incumbent upon them to do; and Weston followed up the interest exhibited by her during the Baptismal service, and persuaded her to accept Christ upon her own faith. Trustful and happy, she soon claimed her place at the other sacrament. The rejoicing mother has no doubt of the baby brother also coming in God's own good time. To all of our minds, there was no barrier of age to keep the dear daughter from confessing Christ so early.

One of our members had married a wife reared under an adverse system. She was still unconverted and very deeply prejudiced against this holy ordinance. She could see no sense in sprinkling children—as she called it. The husband had been very unhappy about it; awaking to his obligation at times, and again discouraged and chilled and suffering his interest to wear away. The revival, while warming his piety toward God, had also revived his anxiety about his offspring. But there

in the center of his home-circle was the unbelieving mother, ready to smile at his superstition. The ultraism over at the school-house at length brought him to reflect that he was in effect throwing his influence to the side of many pernicious errors. Deeply penitent, he led forward his little flock one day and begged the privilege of consecrating them all together to the Lord. The wife retained her seat far back among the congregation, and would take no part in the ceremony. The father stood alone, surrounded by his lovely group, and holding in his arms the little suckling, for the time motherless. The administration of the rite was very affecting. In Weston's tones was a tenderness almost womanly. The father stood alone and felt his loneliness in making the promise to train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. We all knew that the task would be a hard one without the help and sympathy of a good wife. His low tearful answer was only — "I will try." That qualified pledge was all his faint heart could give. Just at that moment, just as the trembling promise was made, and the water had fallen upon the brow, the sweet babe turned its wise face around to the congregation as if missing its mother and searching for her, and uttered distinctly the musical syllables—Mamma, mamma. I think one heart melted that moment as never before. The power of winning that heart to Christ had been hid from the wise and prudent and revealed unto the babe. It was no longer motherless.

How richly the father was rewarded for that hard act of Christian duty when, a few days after, his wife was herself baptized by Weston and declared that the baptism of her children had been owned of God to her salvation!

At another time a young man, while being welcomed into the fellowship of the Church, told the Session: "I was born in a pious home. I had drifted far away from the teachings of my childhood. For one so young, my heart had grown very hard. My parents were both dead. After a night of sin, my brother, remonstrating with me in love, described the scene when my father and mother brought me in their bosoms and offered the little guileless babe to God in baptism. Their looks, their tears, their trust were pictured before me. The guileless babe was guileless now no longer. What a dark change! How I had deceived their hope! My heart broke under the thought. I had trampled upon their faith and upon their Savior. That pictured baptism turned the prodigal back, and now I glory in the Christ they loved and trusted."

The good work continued. Still another came to us and said: "My conversion has been a very strange one. I believe the derisive Ishmaelitish jeers at the follies of pedo-baptist parents, first brought me to think seriously of my impenitence. I could never understand how any one, born and bred a Presbyterian, could ever be drawn over to these loose systems, inveigled

by their shallow fallacies or seduced by a desire of popularity. Especially when we would have to forswear our own baptism, go through the pantomime of another, reject all that was sacred in the old hereditary faith, and submit to listen week after week to fierce denunciations of what was once dearest to the unsophisticated heart. I did not know how sensible men and women would feel amid their new heretical surroundings, when they remembered their parents' hallowed beliefs and contrasted with them the reckless sophistries which now despise and scout them. I knew it meant a wonderful degeneracy and I had no patience with those who could fall so low and be comfortable. But never until lately had I taken the subject home to myself. In my own case might not these scoffers well ask, 'What good did his baptism do him? What did his parents' act of consecration avail?' Had I too not really gone back upon their faith? It set me thinking. The responsibility resting upon the baptized children of the Church settled upon my conscience with a weight I had never known before, and I could not shake it off. The Holy Spirit, symbolized years ago upon my brow, used this course of thought to produce deep conviction for sin. I sought peace where alone it can be found; and I thank God to-day for the faith of the fathers, for their orthodox home-training, for an inherited Presbyterianism, and for infant Church-membership as God's own ordinance for both earth and heaven!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE TWINS.

And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw. — *2 Kings vi: 17.*

IT does the soul of the aged good to see young girlhood working zealously for Christ. A full, fervent consecration of her love, her thought, her delicate tact, to the Redeemer's cause, is loveliness indeed. The hearts of men whom it seemed impossible to touch in any other way, I have seen moved by this gentle agency. One, long indifferent and callous, said to me during our meeting:— "I saw that girl's face whilst pleading with a schoolmate to yield and be saved. I knew that was her plea although I heard no word. Her face looked so pure, so guileless, so tender, so winning, I am sure she was thinking and talking of Jesus. As I looked, I began to think of Him too; and just then she came to me and there was a little tear just stealing from her earnest eye. She was modest and timid and apparently afraid of me— and that touched me most of all. Was I so desperate a sinner that this Christian girl should

shrink from her impulse of grace and duty? feeling for me, weeping for me, and yet trembling lest she be repulsed? It was more than I could bear. She whispered one word, one faltering word, 'Jesus,' and was gone. But it was enough. Before I knew, I was humbled and contrite and wanting that girl's Savior for mine."

And thus quietly and noiselessly Rose Arton labored for the Master and gathered in new blessings upon herself. There was nothing forward, nothing unfeminine; it was retiring, blushing girlhood sacrificing her diffidence and offering her first womanly influence upon the altar of the Lamb. I believe there were not many more useful than she. Weston saw it and was glad. This was the first star in his crown, and in all her efforts for God's glory the young preacher's heart went out prayerfully with her. In many respects she differed from Catherine; yet I am sure that I discerned the aroma of Catherine's character breathing about her and helping to sweeten her ways. I have owned my partiality for Catherine; for Willie's sake there never could be but one Catherine May; but the old man felt that this fervent young disciple was growing upon us in sweetness and power every day.

With us old folks, the things that touch our hearts deepest in the present, awaken cords which thrill backward and start an echo in the past. The kind generation around us must not weary if we are reminded of the old anecdotes very often and

revert to former reminiscences over and over again. At my age there is nothing that is very new; and that which is newest is not to us the best. This revival has been very sweet to me, and only the sweeter because it has proven that we have the the same God to-day whom we worshiped in the years which are gone. Men and women have been hearing His voice just as I heard it in the years of my boyhood. And I have been blessed in seeing other people's children coming to Christ, as one after another I saw my own coming to the Cross in the days that were radiant with joy. Yea, God is just the same, yesterday, to-day and forever!

It is no wonder that her voice went echoing down the vistas of the past when our brown-eyed Rose came to me and said—"I am so young and helpless. What can I do for Jesus?" The very words, yes, syllable by syllable, which my own brown-eyed Mary had uttered to her preacher-father just forty years ago! I suppose the young lassie saw she had started the old dreamer to dreaming, and she sat by my side uncomplainingly and let the old dreamer dream on. Just forty years ago! She was about Rose's age! It was her first work for her Savior. For there was girlhood, and beauty, and early piety, and consecrated loveliness in those days as well as now. And my daughter was pleading with sinners, and sinners were listening to her words. Alas, there came one afterward who would not listen to her persuasive tones, although her credulous heart had

listened too long and too trustfully to his. She was very good and true, and I felt with keen anguish that never, no never, ought a child of God to be wedded to an unbeliever, and plunge needlessly into that great sorrow! Catherine was right; it is a wrong, a great unfathomable wrong, for an ungodly man to press his unregenerate heart upon the acceptance of a Christian woman.

We know but little what the future of these bright maidens may be. We see them growing up in our churches; we have them in our homes; flocks of birdlings, clusters of choice flowers, lambs of the Good Shepherd; and we wonder what the far days may bring. For the first time in my life, thinking of the marriage of my own daughter, I thought of the marriage of Rose. And then I put it away again, for she was but a child. And then I returned to her question.

"My dear," I said, "I know of the burden that oppresses you. You must not be discouraged. God has been using you to soften the hearts of others. And, by God's grace, your brother's will yet listen and yield."

Often in this way the faith of Christian workers is the sorest tried. They see others coming to the Savior, and their own loved ones do not move. Their prayers are answered for others; they pray in vain for their own. They can persuade others, but those that are dearest seem deaf to all their pleadings. A husband, a wife, a father, a mother,

a child, a sister, a brother, is cold, careless, unyielding—dead to their affectionate solicitudes.

I had touched the deepest anxiety in her soul. Her young bosom heaved with its grief. The unconverted know little of the sad hours they cause to loving Christian hearts. Willy seemed unimpressed. Nay, to be growing more hardened and reckless. A score of those of his age had embraced the Savior. Several of his most intimate associates had come into the church. From these he withdrew as if alienated by the step they had taken. The seriousness pervading the school seemed hateful to him and to be driving him to greater extremes. For some reason unknown to the boys, the schoolmaster had suddenly dropped his flings against Revelation, and the little band of embryo scientists began to show demoralization. With no leader to supply them their shibboleths, they weakened and lost confidence.

Perhaps no set of men ever lived who, whether juvenile or senile, have been so helplessly dependent for their creeds upon a few bold theorists as the rank and file of our ordinary claimants to scientific enlightenment. No credulity, no mental subjection were ever more slavish. The speculations of some daring original are swallowed without questioning and revamped as infallible truth. So unintelligent and parasitic are the freaks of infidel faith. Like all the vulgar herd of pretended scientists who take their knowledge at second hand and know nothing beyond the last little

book, the boys could think no more when their acknowledged mentor was silent. Willy alone persisted, and even grew more noisy. He felt a contempt for the cowardice of his companions and talked of the treason of their teacher to the great cause of mind. In his estimation the Christians over at the church needed emancipation from the fading myths of the past.

At another time, he forgot his scientific doubts and became a zealous advocate of the doctrine of baptismal regeneration—the most unscientific thing beneath the stars. Taking his cue from the Ishmaelitish camp, he avowed his conviction that all this praying and weeping and sorrow for sin is unscriptural, and that to follow Christ into the water and under the water is all that is necessary for the salvation of the soul. One act of self-denial in this uncouth ceremony and no further self-denial would be required afterward. It simplified the whole thing. The church of Ishmael heard of this, and began to gather about him with their usual flatteries and seductive attentions. Willy was sensible enough to see through their designs and to turn away with disgust.

At another time he was of the mature opinion that there was no need of churches at all. The arguments of Darby Plym had come to be perfectly conclusive. To be a Christian out of the Church would save expense, avoid unpleasant restraints, prevent sectarian bitterness, and secure to everybody great breadth of views. Great

breadth of views was a great thing. The elevation of everything depended upon great breadth of views. Some inopportunely mentioned Jake Askins as a specimen of the Darby community, and Willy suddenly abandoned his advocacy of great breadth of views.

Beneath it all, there was rankling that deep vexation of spirit about the question of his birth. This he did not publicly mention, but his imagination kept the ulcer irritated and sore. He knew now that Askins was in disgrace and without influence in the church, but he could not forgive society for ever having heard of a taint of blood in himself and sister. And porcupine-like, his pride wrapped itself up in sharp quills and turned the points to all comers.

The mind of a seventeen-years old boy is a strange conglomeration of truths and semi-truths, errors and half-errors, restless logic and many contradictions. Especially when conscience comes in among the heterogeneous mass and stirs it up—errors somersaulting with truths, half-truths jostling half-errors, lame logic struggling with its contradictions, and all with the positiveness of seventeen years old—it becomes confusion worse confounded. The thinking must go on; and it does go on, passing through a thousand grotesque metamorphoses. It may lean first or last to every conceivable heresy of which it has ever heard a hint. Fortunate indeed if in earlier years there has been implanted a sound substratum of truth

upon which God's Spirit may savingly build in the day of His mightier strivings.

Rose heard of all the erratic talk of her brother and it was piercing her very deeply. While working so efficiently for others and rejoicing in their conversion, she was compelled daily to carry this sharp sorrow in her breast. I wish that Willy could have understood it all, for he loved his sister. Like many laborers in the vineyard, she was brought to feel her utter impotence in effecting the salvation of a soul. Then, as was philosophical and wise, we applied to a higher power. Upon our knees we told Him all. I said — "This young maiden, O God, is at her wits' end. She knows she cannot change her brother's heart. She can love him, she can plead with him, she can read to him from Thy holy Word, she can pray; but there her power ends. We plead first for her. Oh that her faith fail not! Yea, for her own sake. Yea, for her brother's sake. Blessed Father, she loves Willy very dearly. Yet Jesus loves Willy more: He has felt more for him and sorrowed more for him. This boy has been bought with blood. There is a cure for boyhood's skepticism. There is a remedy for his vagaries. We know that Thou canst manage the case. Take the case, O Father. Guard the boy's mind. Move among the boy's busy thoughts. Influence the boy's evil tempers. Shape the boys emotions. Touch divinely the boy's sleeping heart. Jesus was once a boy. He is in sympathy with the boys; knows all their

trials; sees all their dangers; is the very Friend they need. Take the case, O God. Wilt Thou not soften and save our Willy?"

"Amen," said a familiar voice, "And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof—Zechariah eight and fifth."

We knew that the ear of God heard us, but we did not know that others were hearing too. Willy had called by for his sister, and Mother Howe had brought him to the study door just as we knelt to pray. They stood there and listened in silence. God rules in the junctures of men's lives very wisely. The hours and the little minutes subserve His behests. Jesus was at the gates of Nain the very moment He was needed. He came to the weeping sisters of Bethany not one minute too late. The counsels of Jehovah move upon a beautiful plan, and the horologe of His throne has never run down and never deceived Him. Our God is the God of all coincidences.

I think I never saw Mother Howe exhibit more consummate tact. There was danger of exciting the lad's resentment, and forcing him upon the defensive. The unconverted dislike the idea of being trapped. We would not have had the scene embarrassing to him. The Mother ushered him into the room, attracting all of our minds away from ourselves to the words that flowed so naturally from her lips about the city which was to be full of boys and girls playing in their joy along its streets. No one ever resented Mother Howe's

Scripture. She seated the boy and, passing on to Rose, kissed off the drops from her cheeks. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death neither sorrow nor crying—Revelation twenty-one and fourth." Apples and nuts were conveniently at hand, and the young people were put at their ease. "For how great is His goodness and how great is His beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful and new wine the maids—Zechariah nine and seventeenth." With all her good humor, there was no danger of dissipating any salutary impressions while she was talking so appropriately from God's own Word. And she knew it.

When we all started to church, I thought I saw a softening down from the late moroseness of the lad. I was glad to find that he was not afraid of me, and I think there was a lingering of his hand in mine as we bade good bye. Lame Johnny called him while passing his door and handed a little strip of paper with a whispered request that he read it during the service. As Mother Howe parted from the boy, I heard her speaking in her most motherly tones — "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong; and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one—First John, two and fourteenth."

The words pleased me well. I saw again the Mother's tact. It is a dangerous thing when a youth comes to believe that the community regards him as hardened and hopeless. He may even

become proud of his distinction in sin and grow ambitious of maintaining a consistency in it. In her quotation, Mother Howe had quietly assumed that Willy's strength was in the Word of God and that he was conscientiously at war with the wicked one. She had ignored the fictitious character he had been acting of indifference to the Gospel truth and had included him among the young men to whom God was still sending His messages of love. And it did the unhappy lad good.

The truth is, God's Spirit had been striving with Willy, and Willy had been resisting His gracious power. The reckless speeches and bold proclamations of doubt, were but a part of this unacknowledged struggle. Awakened souls often press into greater extremes of sin in order to disguise the real feelings within. Sometimes they exaggerate their attitude of impenitence until experienced Christians detect the mask and know that they are ill at ease. I think that Mother Howe was fully awake to this, and was reading Willy to the heart. She had struck the right chord. Scripture was far better than controversy or expostulation.

And now, to the surprise of both the Mother and Willy, Weston preached that night from the very words the youth had last heard before entering the church — "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong; and the word of God abideth in you; and ye have overcome the wicked one." Another of God's coincidences. The atten-

tion of the lad was thereby riveted from the beginning—riveted as it could have been in no other way. The sermon was full of pathos. The preacher was speaking as a young man to young men. He passed among their ordinary experiences of life—their aims, their efforts, their trials, their hopes—and seemed to share their feelings. From his text he developed, 1. The young man's true strength; 2. Its only basis the Bible; 3. The danger of being overcome; 4. The struggle; 5. The victory; 6. God's close interest in it all and sending His messages to them about it. Jesus was uttering all the time sweet words of counsel, of invitation and of cheer. Jesus was once Himself a young man; knows all their trials; sees all their dangers; and is the very Friend they need.

By these words Willy was reminded of the prayer to which he had listened that afternoon—a prayer *made for him*. And then he thought of Rose praying for him, and Catherine praying for him, and of Uncle Allen and Aunt Lydia praying for him; and he thought of what loving help all this would be in overcoming the wicked one. Then too he thought of Mother Howe and Lame Johnny; and he took the strip of paper from his pocket and read — "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy word. Psalm cxix: 9." It would not be surprising if the old Mother had supplied her boy the quotation. Just at that moment the preacher uttered the words — "Rejoice, O young man, in

thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment; therefore remove sorrow from thy heart and put away evil from thy flesh; for childhood and youth are vanity."

Was not God speaking to him on every side? He knew that in all his bitterness against the church, in all his pretensions to skepticism, in all his unamiable waywardness, he had been walking in the ways of his heart and in the sight of his own eyes; and that he would have to meet these venomous feelings and these foolish words in the great Assize. How should he remove sorrow from his heart? Just then came from the pulpit the tender words — "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows."

During these moments Rose was coming to believe that Willie would certainly be saved. She saw it not; she heard no sigh; but somehow the strong faith grew upon her. She remembered the incident told by Anson at the parsonage early in our story; of the assurance that came to him while he was praying that his wife would never be lost. It helped now to strengthen her trust. So it is that the religious conversation of God's people may often be planting, in the minds of the young, precious seed-truths which shall spring up and bear fruit when by us our words may have been forgotten. "Why do not Christians talk more

about Christ?" said an awakened soul during these meetings. "I have sat among God's children over and over, longing for my own soul's sake for the conversation to take a religious turn, and hoping in vain." Anson's description of his remarkable prayer of faith was enabling his adopted daughter to make the prayer of faith. Before she slept that night she *knew* that she offered petitions which would be answered.

As Willy passed out of the house, Catherine for a moment was at his side. Naturally, undemonstratively, without show of effort, she took his hand in hers, pressed it softly, smiled kindly in his eyes, and passed on her gentle way. That was all.

The next morning Rose seemed so cloudless and happy, that the lad almost felt she had forgotten him, and absorbed in her own joy, had left him behind. He was early on his way to school and stopped at the parsonage door. He wanted to see the old housekeeper. "Mother Howe, you must not forget a poor sinful boy to-day." Bad as I am, I want to be a Christian. Tell our dear old pastor to make that prayer again; and over and over." She thought of no words at such a time but words of Scripture tenderness; "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit—Psalm thirty-four and eighteenth." And so she helped him on his way, breathing the healthy balms of the promises.

Willy stopped by Mr. May's and called for our dear girl. "I have wronged you, Miss Catherine; I have wronged everybody; but I know you want me to love your Savior, and to become myself loving and kind to all. You must help me, my own true friend; and you must ask Mr. Weston to pray for me." Certainly he was not far from the kingdom of heaven. And she felt it in her heart. And she told him about the One of whom it is said — "He healeth the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds." And so she too sent him on his way thinking of the faithful Jesus.

And did he continue in this spirit throughout the day? No; at school the dread of ridicule returned upon him, and at intervals he made more violent thrusts at Christianity than ever before. To do this he had to fight his impressions most vehemently, and there were those sagacious enough to see that he was overacting and not at rest. Then he would get away to himself and be overwhelmed with contrition.

And did not the old difficulties arise in his way? Yes, again and again. His birth, Askins, his soured disposition, his desperate efforts to imbibe the schoolmaster's infidel theories, came back in aggravated power and contested every step toward the Cross. Through all these sinful months, unknown to himself, he had been harboring in his own bosom malignant enemies to his present happiness.

But God is good. On the road home that evening, Willy found peace in believing. The yearning

had been increasing upon him to know the Savior's love, to take it to his own sad heart, to possess the sweet consciousness that it embraced him personally. His whole being seemed to be going out in mighty cries that Jesus of Nazareth would love Willy Arton. Oh, that he knew where he might find Him! Oh, that now the glorious Redeemer loved him—*him*—HIM! All at once, in a twinkling, the thought came by the grace of God—"Why, He *does* love me. He has told me so. Told me so over and over again. I know it, because He says so. I don't have to persuade Him to love me. It's a glorious fact! He has been loving me all the time. The trouble was—*I would not see*. Jesus loves me, loves me now; me, Willy Arton—foolish, cross, sinful and all."

And the Autumn fields looked more radiant than Spring, and everything about him put on a glory. A flock of little birds by the roadside seemed to know his gladness and their very eyes to sparkle with his joy. There never was such sunshine before. How grand and glorious the old church looked! The very graveyard was as smiling as a garden of flowers. All the world around appeared as beautiful as a Sabbath. The touch of God's fingers seemed to be gilding everything!

Happy Rose! happy Allen! happy Lydia! I love to scatter these bright scenes along my pages. Far brighter than my groups of happy faces under the trees some months ago, are these happy faces of to-day. Those who have long mourned for the

impenitence of loved ones and then have seen the dear objects of their solicitude rejoicing in Christ, shall paint for themselves the picture.

The following day, unprompted by any but the voice of the Spirit, Willy might have been seen going upon a strange errand. He is approaching the flaming red house on the hill. It is hard, but he is not willing to entertain an unkind feeling toward any human being. He rings the bell, and the only mortal he ever hated opens the door and stands before him. "You viper what brings you upon my premises? How dare you touch my door?" He had tried to prepare himself for this and he answered mildly—"I have wronged you Mr. Askins. I have said hard things about you and felt like killing you. But I am sorry for it now and have come to beg you to forgive me."

"I guess you want some sudden favor at my hands and would lie me into it under this trick"—said the man with a sneer.

"No," answered the lad, very gently, "I want to live a Christian, and I am trying to do as our Savior would have me do."

"Ah, ha, I see it all. You want to keep on the blind side of the Ansons for the sake of their money, and you expect to play the church on them. You know you are getting into disrepute and would hold your place by pretending to become religious all at once. I would be ashamed of the fraud. Away from my sight, you hypocritical young bastard!"

It was very hard, the severest trial that could have come upon him. A moment the old resentment surged up, but for Jesus' sake he put it down. "God bless you, Mr. Askins," he said, and turned away. Turned away strengthened by what he had done and trusting God for many gracious victories in the days to come.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE YOUNG PASTOR'S CLOUDS.

And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone.—*Genesis ii: 18.*

CHRISTMAS, bright Christmas, gladsome Christmas, with the children's abounding joys and the old folks' freshened memories, was upon us in the sparkling resplendence of a genuine Winter day, the earth bride-like in her white robes, and the heavens blue and golden with unclouded expanse, and sun like a diamond. The Revival had left our hearts softened and at peace. In many homes it had planted gardens of evergreen which the frosts of Winter had no power to blight. The neighborhood had sung a new song, and its vibrations were still in the air. The pleasant holidays had come and found us still by our altars of thanksgiving, and from the depths of his soul the old preacher wished a happy Christmas to every heart in all the land.

We did not care to discuss its appropriateness as a religious festival. We knew there was no divine command, and we did not therefore burden

our consciences or our churches with its observance. As a pleasant ancient usage, dear to the hearts of the young, and full of old-time whisperings to the aged; epochs in family histories, sacred to household traditions; we all welcomed the advent of Christmas as a time of innocent relaxation and social enjoyment, and pressed its sacredness no further. It was well enough to give some special seasons in the year to the claims of the heart. The thought of the Manger would do the heart no harm.

It had been arranged beforehand that Weston should spend the day at the parsonage. Others had desired his presence, but they yielded to the old man's wish as to a stronger claim. The acknowledged relationship of father and son solicited at our first meeting, was still maintained. God had answered that day's prayer and bound up our hearts together in loving ties. Between us had grown up a familiarity of confidence which I think was equally delightful to both. We were one in hope for the good of the people, and in zeal for building up a strong church in the neighborhood. Now and then very strong bonds unite the souls of God's ministers, prompted by mutual aspirations after usefulness and sanctified by one indwelling Spirit. These close friendships are helpful and fragrant, lightening the burdens and brightening the successes. As the past and the future were represented on the Mount of Transfiguration, so in our revival gladness the old and the young

pastor represented the past and the future in the history of the Grey-stone church. And there was entire confidence, mellowed into the trustfulness of sonship and fatherhood.

If the indulgent reader knew what is coming, she would hurry me over such explanations into the more interesting particulars of this chapter. I used the feminine pronoun intentionally, because the old preacher is aware that his fair readers have insisted upon this being a love story and upon Calvin Weston's being the hero of it. This, too, notwithstanding the discouraging fact that the young man has not uttered one word about love, nor given a single hint in all this narrative that the thought has ever crossed his mind! So that the old preacher is enjoying a good joke upon the dear creatures who have been determined to have our Weston married whether he showed any inclination that way or not. It is not the first time I have seen that delightful sex forecasting the fortunes of young ministers and outstripping even Cupid himself in their matrimonial guesses. It may be moreover, that some of my charming readers are a little in love with my colleague themselves, and have therefore been watching his preferences with something of a personal partial interest. Nor is this an unheard of thing in the lives of popular young preachers. In these Christmas times the old man will be forgiven his little badinage.

All through the day, there was an abstraction in his manner which did not comport with my antici-

pations of pleasure for the young man. Mother Howe's turkey was the brown rich perfection of culinary art, and her mince-pies could not have been eclipsed in Christendom. The pure juice of the apple contributed from the benevolent press of the Sheldons, was all that the refined palate could desire. Our company seemed fully in the spirit of happy Christmas cheer — all but Weston. He did not satisfy me. Polite, affable at times, there was an absence from his face of something which I wanted there. When I came to think about it, I remembered that this something had been missing for two or three months—yes, even longer. Absorbed in the Revival, everything else swallowed up in those glorious scenes, I had forgotten the human side of my boy. And yet through all his arduous labors, there came distinctly upon my recollection now the same shadow of an unexplained something about his brow. I began to suspect that we had been working the young man too hard; that over-exertion had depressed him. Then again I reproached myself for the disparity of age in my Christmas company. All of us far older than himself; and I ought to have thought of that. We old folks are too apt to be inconsiderate about these natural adaptations, and expect young ministers to be old before their day. Of course there will be a drawing to those of their own age, those of more youthful tastes and fresher hearts. Kind and courteous as they may seem, we must not make too heavy drafts

upon them. They are young and we are old. They cannot all at once overleap all the stretch of years into perfect companionship with our habits and feelings. They will be old enough after awhile.

Weston was always especially courteous to the aged and seemed to seek their society as if by preference. And they loved him dearly. To-day certainly no one noticed any want of attention or of filial consideration. Yet it was a fact that he was considerably our junior, and that perhaps there were in the neighborhood other companies among whom he would have been happier. I ought to have let him go to them, or I ought to have invited those of his own age. Thus in the presence of that little indefinable shadow, my thoughts rambled on. When our guests were leaving, I was just on the point of saying, "Now, my son, go to-night and find lighter and fresher hearts to make Christmas for you before it is entirely gone"; when he anticipated by asking if I was too much wearied to let him spend the evening with me in my study.

"No, my boy, you never weary me," I said. "But you must not stay. You fear that the old man will be lonely to-night and desolate amid his memories of the family who at this bright season once made gladness for him. You must not sacrifice yourself for this. We old people have to get used to these Christmas vacancies; and I want you to unbend among the more joyous bosoms

beating out yonder over the window-lighted landscape to-night."

"No," he said with a smile and with a little embarrassment." "My request is purely and unmercifully selfish. I shall spend the hours either in my own study or in yours; and so I am begging to inflict myself upon you."

And he staid. And then a glimpse at the inner life of the young man was given to me. Eight months ago I introduced him to my readers—his face, his conversation, his sermon. Through these busy eight months we have seen him working in his high office. There are those of us who have felt that we knew little of the man Calvin Weston. The public saw his ministerial life, but his individuality was a thing apart. Had he no weaknesses? What were his foibles? Was he interested in anything but his Master's business? Once, in our first introduction, he had spoken of his orphanhood and of the double parental grave. Rose had listened to a beautiful description of his mother. This was the most that any of us had ever heard of his heart history. He talked as little about himself as any man I ever saw.

The large wood fire was burning brightly. I had never consented to give up the open fireplace and the yule log. The out-door frosts could touch us no more than if they had been banished to the poles. I was glad that Weston stayed, for to me the room was brighter for his presence. He did

not wait long before telling me all. With his usual frankness he came rapidly to the point.

"This Christmas, my dear father, finds me lonely and sad. I once had a home and home-ties. Three years ago my mother died. The light of my existence suddenly went out, for she had been all that I had left. The others, one by one, had gone before. I had never thought of her leaving me. She gave me to the Gospel ministry. In my preparation, I was inspired in all my labors and successes by her. The sermons of the future were to be better and holier because of her prayers and her love. She never lived to hear me preach. My heart failed me and I drew back. I wanted to relinquish the high office, for I felt more unequal to it now than ever before. How could I venture out upon its duties without the true heart upon which I had counted? But God called me on, and I was forced to go to the pulpit—brotherless, sisterless, fatherless, motherless, yea, unloved. I came to the people here. Your heart and their hearts have been wondrous kind; surely none kinder in all the world. And yet there has been a void. The more my duties increased, the more the feeling grew. The Revival came, and, in spite of me, there was the void. I yearned in the midst of a great lack—some twin life to share my hopes, my anxieties, my joys, my sleepless nights. Why did my mother die so soon! Christmas has come and there is still this great vacancy. It weighs upon me. I need some one to rest me. I need

some one to brighten my studies. Sometimes I feel that I shall be a failure unless this void is filled."

This flow of the man's real selfhood was delightful to me. He had seemed to me strong, almost too strong, for one so young. I do not know but his firm exact performance of duty, had been at times almost painful to me. If the above was weakness, I was willing to discover such weakness as allied him tenderly to our common humanity. I do not think I spoke unwisely.

"You need a home, my son. Under God you are entitled to it. The time has come when you will walk alone to your own hurt. God took your mother from you because she was ripe for heaven; but He did not mean thereby to burden your life with gloom. Even had your parents lived, the hour would have dawned when you would have looked up that old text—'For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh.'"

"I have thought of that," he said. How charmingly candid the young man was! "But if my mother had lived, I do not believe I would ever have cared to marry. God only knows. It seems to me that she would have been enough. I would then have had some one to think of me always, for every day she would have carried me upon her heart of hearts. There would have been great strength in knowing there was one true and faithful and loving—one personally interested in my labors —one sharing every care and every success. The

love of Jesus is just such a love, and my mother's helped me to believe in His. It seems to me that I would have needed no other. I do not know."

No, young man, you do not know. That something was coming out upon his face more than ever. I saw where God was leading and I would help my son in his confidence.

"If your dear mother were living, my boy, I am sure she would wish for you that possession without which life can never be complete. These beautiful relationships which God has created, do not conflict; nor does one ever fill the place of another. The true mother does not stand in the way of a tie nearer yet. I never knew the loved being you so sorely miss, but I know of one who would have filled most pleasantly and sweetly a daughter's place in her heart."

Again he slightly smiled. "You are thinking of Catherine," he said. The old man appreciated his delightful frankness. "She is one of the noblest of women, and at times she reminds me strangely of my dead mother. I suppose the church would be pleased with the marriage. I believe my old father would not object. I am sure that a minister could find no better helper in his labors. The man ought to be very happy that could win her hand. I felt that I must talk to you about it. We are already as sister and brother. Ought we to be something more?"

His last sentences had puzzled me. I do not know that I was altogether pleased. There was a

business-like summing up of the case which did not fully accord with the memories of my youth. He had not spoken of his love. I was not willing for Catherine's heart to be weighed even in the balance of ministerial usefulness. I thought of my Willie and his disinterested devotion. I thought of Catherine's faithful visits to his grave. Then it occurred to me that I was letting my own buried child sway me against Weston's claims. I would subdue that infirmity. Only I did not want my Catherine ever to know a love less true.

"Have you yet spoken to the dear girl about your interest in her?" I asked.

"I have not," he answered. "It has been upon my mind, but it was a solemn matter, and I wanted first to talk with you."

This disarmed me. I had done the young man wrong. But I could not forbear asking again:

"Have you ever felt like telling Catherine of your love and offering her the opulence of a full gushing heart? Have you been sweetly drawn to talk to her about a common hope and a common destiny?"

Was I cross-examining the young man? I could not have explained myself. But I do believe before God that nothing in all the domains of the soul has a right to prompt the thought of marriage, but love, only love. Perhaps in spite of all my resolves, I was still thinking of Willie. It was Christmas, and my sepulchred children were very near to me.

He said he had postponed the thought and purpose. They had grown into close companionship. They talked about common purposes of usefulness; the church, the Sunday-school, the sick, the poor. He had not alluded to any personal interest in her. She did not suspect it. The story of his matrimonial hopes would be a surprise to her. Perhaps an unpleasant surprise.

I did not know whether I was answered or not. But of one thing I was assured—the young folks must settle it between themselves. Weston and I could never determine whether they ought to marry. They must talk it over face to face, and their own heads and hearts must interpret the problem. No third person had a right or the ability to forecast the great question of love. So I said:

"Go and talk to Catherine, my son. She will meet you as a woman should meet an honest man. God will rule the final result as it shall be best. He loves you both; submitting your hopes to Him, all will be well. He mates the souls of His children, and He alone. Go like a true knight who need not blush for what he does. Whether you succeed or fail, there will be no dishonor. My blessing follow you. The time has certainly come when, as I expected first or last, God is showing your need of a help-meet. Catherine is bound to me by peculiar ties. Your heart prompting and hers responding, I will give her to you, my son. While the Christmas season increases your loneli-

ness, tell the dear girl all; and I pray that God's smiles may brighten the wooing."

After the young man was gone, I sat a long time in deep thought. The large pile in the fire place had sunken low, and the bright flames flashed no longer. In the mass of live coals I gazed upon Christmas scenes and Christmas faces now forever gone; and six sweet graceful children's forms kept coming and going in the distant ember vistas. The faces that staid the longest were the faces of my Willie and my Mary—both taken from us by the hands of cruel men—Willie blighted before his time beneath the waves of yonder pond, and my daughter under a more terrible blight, the blight of the heart, fading inch by inch and dying far away among strangers. Had he lived he would have married happily; she lived and married unhappily. Hers was the darker doom of the two. There in the hot embers, I saw a loveless wedded life as a seven times heated furnace of woe!

Mother Howe knew that the old preacher was lingering too late. She passed through the room to interrupt my dreams. "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep; for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety—Psalm four and eighth." I took the hint and went to bed.

Why does the old preacher talk so much? Why so many details while all are waiting to learn the results of that long expected courtship? How did he begin? Do ministers do these things like

other people? Did they sing and pray and read the Scriptures, and make an awfully serious affair of it, leaving out all the fun? Did she affect great astonishment, as usually happens, although the whole neighborhood had been thinking about it for many months? Did he who had faced large assemblies, find his heart fail him in addressing one loved woman? Why are men so cowardly about these things? Why does not the old preacher hurry and tell us all about it? So are thinking my fair readers; and, surely enough, I ought to know that the dear creatures are feeling more interest in an eligible young suitor like Weston than in the reveries of the old. And yet we old men remember very well bright Christmases a little way back, when the thoughts of beautiful damsels were centering just as pleasantly upon us!

The week of joyous holidays still lingered. The neighborhood held to its old custom of special entertainments and social visiting until New Year's. We countenanced no dissipation, but we did countenance a more general flow of innocent pleasure. Rose Arton had been spending one of these days with Catherine. Since the pupil had been brought to Christ, these two were dearer to each other than ever, for Christianity sweetens all ties. Neither one had ever known a sister's love; both had yearned for it; and now as the older and younger, they seemed almost to be possessing that for which they had often longed. If the reproach of birth still distressed the orphans, no one knew it but

themselves. Catherine had kept them by her side in the social scale, and no one whose friendship she cherished would be long slighted.

Rose had never seemed more happy or more lovely, than during this day at the May's. None of the family were at home but Catherine and the young pastor. When Rose started, these two attended her to the Ansons' gate and returned together. They went into the parlor and together awaited the family. The shadow was again upon the pastor's brow. Catherine's quick eye, awake to every sorrow, had noticed it often, and saw it deeper to-night than ever before. It was sad to her that one who was doing so much good and gladdening so many hearts, should be himself oppressed by some secret grief. As often before, she went to the piano and touched its keys in her own soft way, occasionally joining her sweet voice with the chords and warbling some cheerful air. He was reclining upon the sofa on the far side of the room with his eyes fixed upon her. Over and over he recalled the picture of Catherine and her young friend as he had seen them during the day. Now and then Rose seemed to come in and stand beside the gentle musician and place a loving arm around her. How graceful the attitude! How attractive the picture of the two! He thought of a home lighted by such scenes. There was something in Catherine to-night that reminded him more than ever of his departed mother. Why should he not speak?

He came to her side, where the graceful form of Rose had seemed to be standing; and during an interval in the music he said: "You are resting me, Catherine. You always rest me. I do not think I could have gone through the late weeks of labor, were it not that I had you to rest me. Your calm faith, your quiet zeal, your very presence in the house soothed my fears, stilled my nerves and kept me up when inclined to droop. I never think of Catherine May without a feeling of rest. I need you all the time, Catherine. You must come into my life and be its sunshine, now and always."

And then the dear girl told him all. Told what she had never told to mortal ear before. Told what was known only to herself and the old pastor. Told of the one love and its sudden desolation. Told of a grave as dearer to her than all the world beside.

He saw it all. He understood her presence that day in the Session. She had tamed the murderer of her only love and had won him to Christ. What a heart was this! What kindness to an enemy and what fidelity to Jesus! He admired her as never before. No wonder she could rest others, after securing tranquility to her own soul from the track of that tornado which had crushed through her girlhood's life. There came into his words an earnestness which had not been there. She was the help he needed in his work for Christ. The old pastor had endorsed his wish and pronounced his fatherly benediction upon the union.

I am thinking it was probably this which turned her mind from the feeling that it was impossible. The desire of Willie's father was almost a message from Willie. She listened to Weston's plans of usefulness with new interest. He pictured their united future in the vineyard of the Lord. She was necessary to him in all that he hoped to accomplish for Christ. He had touched the tenderest tendril left vibrating within her heart. Ought she to let the past detain her from new and broader labors for the Master? This good man had called her his rest. She remembered the shadow upon him after hard labor. She knew that her music had cheered him when depressed. Ought she to refuse her life to greater usefulness because of one mighty sorrow?

But she was not willing to disappoint a suitor's just hopes. She was afraid he might be disappointed. She could never forget Willie. She could not bring such love as ought to be Weston's. She could offer him only truest friendship, faithful companionship, and sympathy in all his aspirations. He believed that this was what he wanted. He was willing that she should come to him even as one that had been wed to another. In his delicacy of consideration, he talked more of other things than of love. They would be one in endeavor, one in hope, one in the Gospel, one in caring for the grave of Willie.

And so they were betrothed. Only she desired that the marriage might be for awhile deferred.

She had never expected to marry. She had hoped that no one would ever ask her. For years a new love had been an utterly discarded thought. Her life had been already full. And Mr. Weston must give her time. She was sure that Willie's father would agree with her in this, and her betrothed must not be impatient. And Weston was not impatient, although the shadow did not wholly vanish away. Catherine went to sleep thinking of the orphan, and wondering if Rose would love her any better as her pastor's wife than she had loved her as her teacher. And their thoughts already becoming one, Weston's last mental vision that night was the double picture of Catherine and Rose side by side and talking in close confidence just as he had seen them so often in the past.

And we were all glad. Everybody loved them both and everybody thought they suited. Tom Gaines heard of it in his prison and prayed for their happiness. Nancy Smith came as near to rejoicing as she had ever approximated in her life—having but one dread; that Weston would work himself to death before the wedding day should come. The church was so inconsiderate in putting so many burdens upon an engaged young man! Mother Howe was exhausting the Old and New Testaments in blessings upon the mating.

Is the fair reader equally pleased with our Christmas and its results?

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IN HARNESS.

"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"—*Paul, the new convert.*

WE will listen to a part of a sermon which followed the late revival.

"Are we now to go forward or backward? What is to be the effect of these precious scenes upon our history? Have we secured an advanced position and are we going to maintain it? Is the church to be permanently benefitted? Have we made progress in the divine life, and shall our course be continually onward? Who of us will be willing to sink into the indifference and inactivity once ours? Who will not rather contemplate new attainments, and press on to the enjoyment of greater victories? Are we to advance or retrograde? Shall the working power of the church be strengthened? Shall the number and shall the zeal of God's true laborers be increased? Shall our generosity in giving be greater? Shall our personal sacrifices for Christ be larger? Shall our faith be stronger? Shall there be more of real, devoted, fervent, vital godliness? Yea, is our increase of membership

to bring strength or weakness to the church? Are we to freeze them into drones or inspire them into healthy activity? Will we dwarf or develope their capabilities? Has the church taken a decided step forward and are we going to utilize the advantage gained? Is the revival over, its work finished, its unction gone, its power dead, and are we to be as careless, as torpid, as unbelieving as ever? Or shall we remain revived, and live purer lives and do nobler work? Have we all made substantial progress, and shall we henceforth labor from a higher and holier stand-point on toward attainments higher and holier still?"

Weston had touched upon what the old preacher considers a most important thought. The new additions to our churches are never likely to take a higher position in grace and usefulness than the average of the previous membership. Children derive their characteristics largely from the mother; and the church, healthy or unhealthy, is to be the nursing mother of her young converts. They will not long exceed her zeal, activity or holiness. For this reason we recognize certain practical facts:—

1. It is not a misfortune to unite with the church in times of revival. While all is life and energy around them, these new members begin at a higher elevation. I have shuddered at seeing young Christians uniting with a cold dead church. Then in their most impressible state, they will take their tone of piety from the older members. Their first six months in the church may decide the type of

their religion perhaps for life. With warm fervor and intelligent effort all about them, they imbibe the spirit and shape their future.

2. These protracted meetings ought to stop before God's people are worn out and their zeal has drooped. It is not wisdom to work them into exhaustion. Whatever the irregulated notions to the contrary, large observation has convinced our best workers that these special efforts ought to close while Christians are not too much wearied; while they are energetic, hopeful, and are wanting the services to go on. Reserve reasonably the strength of your people for continuous effort under the ordinary means of grace. For the sake of the new accessions, let the services stop while the church is still alive and not too much jaded.

3. A heavier responsibility rests upon the church than before the revival. It is no time for settling down satisfied and self-complacent into idleness. Thereby we drag all the new converts down with us. The call is loud for every workman to be at his post. By example and earnestness of soul, we ought to be leading every fresh recruit to the front.

4. Let it be remembered that there is now in the heart of every true convert an impulse to work. These impulses ought to be wisely directed into exercise. If this first glow of feeling is allowed to smoulder and die out without being brought into action, it may entail an unwholesome mildew upon the soul for life. The emotional in our re-

ligion should outwork in the practical. Christianity contemplates both. It is not all faith. It is not all feeling. It is not all work. It is a symmetrical blending of all three. Faith worketh by love. The convert should never be left to infer that the Christian life is all mysticism. Let him learn that it is faith and love in action.

Paul's inquiry was repeated very often in our meeting. The regenerating Spirit implanted a new life and the new life aspired to honor the Redeemer. "My influence has been wholly against you since you came; now I want to work with you"—said a man of family to Weston. "I thank you," answered the pastor. "Go home to-night and set up a family altar; and it will be strong substantial help to us all." "It will be very hard, the hardest task you could have asked"—he replied, "but I will try." The wife came to the pastor a little while afterward and said—"I want to serve the Master; what can I do?" The answer was—"Take the lamp and Bible on your little stand to-night and bring them to your husband's side. It will encourage a good intention and smooth the way to the performance of duty. Another's cross lightened, is always a good work done." In every case where the convert was a head of family, we urged this duty earnestly. It would be easier now than it would ever be again.

"Tell me," said a young man, "how I am to start in the Christian life." "Come to the Sabbath School next Sunday morning and identify yourself

with the Bible Class. The word of God is henceforth to be the man of your counsel. It ought to be your bosom companion. Through its pages, the Master is waiting to tell you a great many precious things. There never will be a turning point in your destiny when its chapters will not contain something to suit the case. You will be strong and wise and happy in proportion as you love and keep its precepts. 'Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me?'"

"I feel that I would like to bring everybody to Christ," said another. "Go at once and see your classmate; and as kindly and gently as you can, tell him so. Hasten while your heart is warm. Never let an impulse like this be smothered. Go like Philip to Nathanael and say—Come and see." These young souls want definiteness in our counsels. It will not do simply to say—"You must bestir yourselves and work." They do not know where to take hold. They want us to point out some specific act, and they will be very thankful when we help them to discover an avenue of usefulness.

"I cannot talk," said a lady; "my feelings overcome me. I wish I could plead with sinners, but I break down in tears." "Then do not fail to see Lizzie Vinton to-morrow. I have heard her say that she can stand anything but tears; that no sermon could affect her like a young disciple weeping. Put your arm around her; feel as much as you can

for her lost condition; and let your soul dissolve in tenderness. Christian emotion should be all consecrated to some evangelical end. 'He that goeth forth and weepeth bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.'"

"There is one soul that bears continually on my mind. I don't know why it is. I have no reason to believe he is interested. But I think of him during the sermon, and upon my knees, and day and night. Would to God he might be reached!" So spoke one whose anxiety showed unmistakably in his face. "Then you are the very one," we answered, "to talk with him about his soul. In this way God directs us to those upon whom by His help we may exert salutary influence. Usually in such cases the Spirit has preceded us and prepared the way for an approach. You need not hesitate. It is more than probable that your friend is just as anxiously awaiting your coming. Thus God sent Ananias to Paul, Philip to the Eunuch, and so He sends His chosen counselors yet."

"I read a passage in the Bible this morning, sweet and affecting, which seemed to me exactly to suit Clara Doan. I know something of her state of feeling, and I wish she could be induced to read and think about it." "Then mark the verses," Weston replied, "and take the blessed Book to her privately and ask her to read it thoughtfully. While she is reading, let your soul be pleading before God that He will speak personally to her

through His holy message of love. No matter that she has seemed cold and hard hitherto. 'Is not my word like as a fire, saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?'"

"I have joined your church without knowing clearly what your church believes," said one of our neighbors. "Can I inform myself certainly as to its doctrines?" "You can and ought to," answered the preacher. "We have nothing to conceal. We have no purpose to subserve by keeping our faith hidden or undefined. Private members are not required to accept our peculiar denominational tenets; but it is well for every one to know them; and better, as we think, for every one to believe them. I make you a present of this Confession of Faith. Read it carefully as our best commentary on the Scriptures—for the Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and practice. I especially urge that you examine every proof-text in this little book, and accept our time-honored creed just so far as it agrees with the Bible; and no further. 'Hold fast the form of sound words.'"

"I have never given to the Lord as I ought to have given"—said Mr. Sheldon. "People have called me liberal, but I feel now that I might have done far more. I want henceforth to consecrate my possessions to my Master. Will you help me to find a worthy cause for practical beneficence?" I replied—"God has placed a most attractive plea conveniently at your door. The Valey children

are apt to learn and very promising. Their parents have not the means to educate them nor even to dress them decently for school. Your kind liberality might do great good there. 'The poor ye have always with you,' said the Savior; and we are told that He 'loveth the cheerful giver.'" "Yes," the sincere man answered, "I thank you from my heart. Strange that I never thought of these children before. The suggestion is very pleasing to me."

Six or eight young men came to us at one time and said through the bravest—"We are ambitious to do something for Christ. We would be glad to endure any sacrifice. We want to be foreign missionaries or something." Was there danger of present duties being slighted because of visionary projects and romantic dreams? But at any rate here was an aspiration worth directing. "Yes, the Savior is calling you all into His vineyard. At present His vineyard for us all, is here. Foreign missionaries always begin by working at home. We need your young voices in prayer. If you are willing, I will call on each one of you to offer a petition or two in our next prayer-meeting. It will perhaps be just as hard at first as to be a foreign missionary, but God will help you through. Then come and see me again, and we will talk of other duties. There is glorious work for young men in all our churches. 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up upon wings as eagles.'"

"Before I entered your church," said one, "I had listened to these unsatisfactory discussions on the subject of baptism until my mind had become confused. The quibbles still return upon me at times and give me trouble." "Will you come to my study at four o'clock," answered Weston, "and let us settle this unfortunate difficulty once for all. Otherwise this exaggerated importance of the mere form of a rite, may chill your faith and dampen your joys and stifle your zeal for many months. A soul is in no condition to work efficiently for others or to grow in grace himself while bothered and perplexed by these unnecessary distractions. Satan loves to hold back the young convert from peace and usefulness, by this controversy as to the quantity of water. Come and let us settle this question fully and finally from the Bible. We shall there find that a divine symbol always pictures to the eye the thing signified; that the thing signified in this ordinance is the coming upon us of the Holy Spirit; that the Scriptures speak of the Holy Spirit as poured out and falling upon its subjects in Isaiah and Joel and in the second and tenth chapters of Acts; that Jesus himself in the fifth verse of the first chapter of Acts calls that mode of the descent of the Spirit a baptism. There is the Old Testament picture and there is the New Testament fact. Come and let the Word of God make all this plain. While God is calling to an active Christian life, it is not wise to waste time and thought and energy among the ritualists.

There are better things ahead. 'Therefore,' as Paul exhorts, 'leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms and of laying on of hands.'"

Said Willy Arton to us— "I believe our teacher is thinking seriously about his soul. He told me the other day that he guessed there were no better books than the old Bible after all, and that we often forget that many of our ablest scientific men have regarded it with the utmost reverence. I told him that our old pastor's library contained many volumes showing that there is no conflict between God's works and God's words. He answered that he would be glad to have access to your study, if he only thought that the preachers liked him." "Now Willy," I said, "you must persuade him out of all fear of that kind. It may be your special work. Tell him of the rare Geological specimens in that cabinet of which I am known to be very proud; and ask him as your teacher to come and examine them at his convenience. You must help us to disabuse his mind of the impression that there is any prejudice in the hearts of God's ministers against the honest students of the philosophy of nature. It is time the world knew that there is no necessary antagonism between the expounders of Revelation and the expounders of natural law. I would like for you and the Professor to take supper at the parsonage on Friday

next. Come directly from the school in order that we may have a long pleasant evening together among the books." Willy was delighted, and so too I think was his teacher.

"I begin to fear that I acted prematurely,"—mourned a young doubter. "I may not have been converted after all, though honest at the time. I do not enjoy prayer enough. I do not love the Bible enough. I am not zealous enough. I am not good enough. I do not feel enough. The way looks dark." Scores will strike upon that dangerous shoal. Their minds must be elevated from self to God, or they will be weakened and lamed by despondency for many barren months. Perhaps permanently damaged. They must be led to see that it is the intensity of the feelings of Jesus that saves and not their own; that "the enough" is found in the Savior and never in themselves. We sent Mother Howe to the young doubter. Her Scripture would be the best treatment for legal gloom, showing by fact and by promise that—"There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

"One of my best and most intimate friends is very worldly, is profane, scoffs at religion, and laughs at my scruples," said a gentleman to some of us. He was speaking in sadness and sorrow of one whom he had loved very dearly. "If he persists in this, he has ceased to be your friend; he has become your worst enemy. I would pray for

him; would kindly remonstrate with him; and then, if there is no change, you must certainly withdraw from the intimacy. Our early graces are green and tender, and they cannot stand the frosts of worldly companionships. You had better lose your earthly friend than lose your Heavenly Friend. Seek Christian companionships instead, and they will be safer and sweeter and truer. 'What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?'"

There was a more trying case. One of our young ladies had been receiving considerable attention from an openly ungodly man. It was understood that he was a suitor for her hand, but as yet there had been no pledges. As is too often the case, although wicked and vile and unworthy of her, he had found favor in her eyes. Now that she had come to Christ, she was very unhappy over his character and conduct. What was the Christian girl to do? We referred her to Catherine. We knew Catherine's delicacy and good sense, and we could depend upon her. There is one in every church who is best suited to every special demand for sympathy and counsel in that church. "If a man," she said, "does not sufficiently respect our feelings to avoid what is utterly repulsive to our consciences, he certainly proves himself entirely reckless of our happiness. Were he to insult our mothers, we would resent it and drop his acquaintance. Insulting our Savior, he insults one no less dear. If he has no respect for the character of Christ, he will have no permanent respect for a

character which is trying to grow like Christ. I believe, my dear Jessie, that you are standing in great danger. You are to choose between the society of Jesus and the society of His bitter foe. Oh, that the grace of Christ may possess your heart and save you in time! To repel the young man may seem hard to you, but in a lady-like way it must be done! The hour has come in your history for the cut-off right hand. My heart bleeds for you, but I believe you will conquer. Come to me often and confer about it. I see you smiling over your infatuation after a little. For your soul's sake and for Jesus' sake, I am sure that you will beware and listen to His word when He says—'Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.'"

"I am to be pitied," said a man of mature years; "I am undertaking to live a Christian life, but you have no idea how ignorant I am. Many of these little children who have come into the Church know more about the gospel than I do. You must teach me, for at best I am but a babe." In fact, they were all babes, and needed the sincere milk of the world. Through her membership and her ordinances the Church was to be their teacher. To meet these needs, Weston appointed what were called convert-meetings, in which the first principles of the system of redemption were carefully explained, and in which it was never taken for granted that our learners knew very much. Weston went over the evidences of Christianity,

making all his arguments simple enough to suit a child's mind. In all this he pursued a regular order; and I soon found that, question by question, he was following our Shorter Catechism—the best system of theology ever devised. In this way he touched in an intelligent and logical form upon almost every problem in the life of the young convert. The great commision had said, "Go teach all nations."

"These moods and frames trouble me," said one. "I do not know what to make of them. Sometimes I am very happy, and sometimes unhappy; sometimes there is a sweet relish in the performance of duty, and sometimes it is drudgery. What am I to do?" "Remember that religion is a matter of principle and not of moods," was the answer. "Act upon motives of right and not of emotion. Be only the more diligent in using the means of grace the less you feel like using them. Perform your duty because God calls you to it, and not because of the pleasure it gives you. When cold and careless, go at once and work for the good of others. God turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends. The joys of religion will oftenest return to your own soul when you are forgetting self in your interest for other souls. Christianity is principle, and not simply passion."

"I lose all patience with the obstinacy of sinners," said one of our new members, a man of great energy and strong will. "They know their duty well enough, yet there they stay as stubborn

as mules. I feel like dragging them to the cross by the hair of their heads." "But you will never get them there by any such process," answered the old preacher, smiling. We knew that in his inconsiderate fervor he had more than once given serious offence by a zeal without knowledge. "God wants His servants to be as wise as serpents. Imprudence has done much harm in the kingdom. Rudeness has long since been made an outlaw in the vineyard of the Meek and the Lowly. We have no right to disregard the feelings of the sinner. Some will be provoked into opposition by overpressure. Some will not bear to be singled out for public notice. Some are averse to too much persuasion. Some must think their way to a conclusion without constant talk, needing instead quiet and solitude. None can be coerced into religion. No pet way of working will suit all cases. Select the proper times of approach. Take human nature as it is, and watch its many varieties. We are as solemnly responsible to God for our common sense as for anything else. There has been many a soul repelled and chilled and ruined by injudicious zeal. We must respect the different tastes and temperaments and prejudices of men. The winner of souls should be gentle and persuasive and discreet. In the Scriptures there is a precept even like this: 'Let not, then, your good be evil spoken of.'"

"How many dispositions and tendencies among our new members," said Elder Lardner. "These

we can never train effectually unless we become acquainted with them. We must learn their peculiarities and gain their confidence. We ought not to stop until we have given them all a home-attachment to the Church and made them feel that we are their friends." The Elder was certainly right. We resolved as a Session to show a real heart-interest in every one of these new recruits, encouraging and advising and befriending them whenever opportunity could be found. To help us in this we studied them carefully, their characters and their habits. Not only the Session, but our entire membership were led to be attentive and kind. The cultivation of these Christian sympathies and graces was a great advantage to us, and a great lever for good. Says the wise man. "He that hath friends must show himself friendly. So also it must be with the Church.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

PRISON-DOORS AJAR.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.—*Eighth Chapter of Romans.*

THE case had been called. The Court Room was crowded with curious faces, eager to witness the trial. The peculiarity of the circumstances had brought many strangers together as well as nearly our entire neighborhood. The indictment for deliberate and malicious murder was read and the accused was asked to plead. As he arose, calm and self-possessed, there was a better and happier look upon the face of Tom Gaines than I had ever seen before. The cynical scowl was gone, and an expression of serenity and good will had taken its place. With hair combed and with the dark bronze cleared out of his complexion by seclusion from the sun, and especially with that remarkable change of countenance, he seemed another person. The change in the soul was rapidly transforming even the outward man. The eyes of all were intent upon him while he said:

"Guilty, your honor. The guiltiest of the guilty. I killed the boy. I knew he was one of the noblest lads that ever lived, and the better he was the more I hated him. These wicked hands did the deed. This more wicked heart inspired it. 'Instigated by the devil'—your indictment puts it right. I have no excuse to make. Some are disposed to palliate the offence, but you ought not to heed them. It was nothing but an aggravated brutal murder. My spite against the boy's father made it worse. I meant to murder his happiness with the same blow which murdered his son. It was no credit to me that I failed. That was what the devil was after, but the old man's God was too strong for Satan and kept him at bay. I want to say one thing more and I am done. Sin and crime are no luxury. They have made life miserable. This is the brightest day for many years; because I can now confess and denounce sin and satisfy justice. I have no dread of your sentence. I court it. Do not try to be tender with me. There is a little child named Sammy high up among the angels, and he will not spurn me although going up from your gallows. For ten years conscience has been worse than death. I shall be glad for the law to stand vindicated. Yes, your honor, I am guilty."

The Judge had suffered him to talk on. There was a sensation all over the house—whether favorable or unfavorable we could not tell. Only two in the room seemed cool and collected—the Judge

and the culprit. The former turned and asked Gaines' counsel if this plea had been made by their advice. His honor knew there had been some public questioning as to the prisoner's sanity. Gaines had provided against all such contingencies. For this cause, he had engaged counsel, not to defend him, but to testify to his deliberation and to keep his purpose within the forms of law. His lawyers stated that it was his own act, by his own considerate choice, and that otherwise they would have no difficulty in his defence. The prosecuting attorney volunteered to say that without the confession of Gaines there was no case against him; that there were indeed some circumstances substantiating his story; but that these were not sufficient in themselves to convict him. He added that he believed there was another as culpable as the accused, whom the law could not reach but without whose influence this crime in all probability would never have been committed.

The Judge asked if Gaines had anything to say why sentence of death should not be pronounced upon him? Clearly and distinctly through the intense stillness came the words—"Absolutely nothing." The murderer had grown almost handsome. Upon his brow sat the satisfaction and repose of an accomplished victory. The incubus of many heavy years of concealment had been thrown off. Now he was even more self-possessed than the Judge himself. There was nothing left for the latter but to follow the demands of the law

and affix the penalty—That the criminal be hanged by the neck until dead!

"I thank you," said Gaines. "Your honor has done your duty. It was more unpleasant to you than to me. The law came because of sin, and capital punishment is right. I can sleep to-night. Judge, your words have made me feel better than I have felt since that deed was done. I again bear my testimony that conscience is more to be dreaded than any witness that could ever be summoned into your Court. Yes, I thank you. May God bless you!"

And the condemned felon went back contented and tranquil to his cell, to await the day of execution. There were some that shook hands with Gaines that hour who had never done so before. Our retired neighborhood suddenly became famous. Some seemed almost proud of the sensation as the news spread through the papers. Human nature is human nature whether in city or in country. One lone old heart had to live the news through, again and again, remembering the day which arose and smiled upon a happy family to go down in a few hours in tears. Not many of these winged messengers go out limp and fresh from the press without carrying sad reminders to more than one bosom in the land. These silent visitors came often into the study where the little idol used to play, bringing back the history of the dark tragedy afresh. There were many distortions of fact, the gination of editors and correspondents conspir-

ing to misrepresent and exaggerate the horror. But out of it all, one stern fact, a fact that needed no exaggeration, arose and faced me over and over—My dear boy joyous and lovable in the morning and carried home as night drew on—faded and dead! Through yonder low avenue of trees came slowly the sad neighbors at sunset bringing upon their rude pall the drenched corpse of the child to the embrace of the bosoms that were bleeding.

Gazing as often before, down that same path among the elms, I saw our Catherine coming along in pensive thoughtfulness toward the parsonage. The trees that looked down upon the blighted Willie were now looking down upon her. The slant rays of the departing sun broke through a golden cloud curtaining the West and rested upon her chestnut hair like a halo. My flock of sheep lingered around her path, and one of them came familiarly near and let her place the soft little hand upon its head. It was now grown, but it had not forgotten the gentle kindness which had pitied its motherless infancy last Spring and nursed it into strength and happiness. Mother Howe had evidently discovered her approach. In the adjoining room I heard the low words—"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God—Matthew five and eighth."

As on many occasions before, she had come on an errand of mercy. Was there any way to save the murderer from the gallows? Could.

not the old preacher and herself do something to prevent the execution of the sentence? I own that I had expected the death of this criminal to follow as a matter of course upon his conviction. He deserved to die. I had no thought but that he must die. Felons had run unwhipped of justice until the laws were contemned all over the land. A squeamishness about capital punishment was one of the evil signs of the times. Although it had been positively written— "He that killeth any man shall surely be put to death"—yet our day had grown wiser than Moses or the God of Moses. Here I had been detecting a part of that vapid humanitarian laxness which would substitute the sugary sentimentalism of an unbalanced bosom, for the infallible wisdom of Him who made society and made government. The unwashed stains of a thousand murders were already crying to heaven from all over the country's broad expanse. I do wish well to every sinner on earth, but at the same time I have grown sick of that milk-and-water sentiment which shrinks from everything but crime, and which would even fritter away the retributive justice of the Almighty. And so, although I had certainly trusted the man's conversion and recognized him now as a fellow believer, yet I had taken it for granted that Tom Gaines must bear the penalty of the broken law.

Her dear kind heart had thought it all through. Admitting the full force of all these undoubted truths, might there not be righteous exceptions?

The design of capital punishment was to prevent rather than to avenge. As a warning against crime, might not the life and testimony of Gaines accomplish more good than the hushing of his voice by the rope? Might it not be well to let him live on and continue to tell of the bitterness of undiscovered sin? David was forgiven for his deed of blood both by God and man; and his penitent psalm is in the hand of every guilty mourner even to this day. Catherine could not entertain the thought of a wrong truly repented of going unpardoned. Forgiveness of the penitent for broken law was one of the immutable principles of the divine government; nor had its stability or efficiency ever been shaken by the forgiveness of any sinner however wicked. True, God could read the heart and we cannot; but in the case of Gaines there could be no doubt. He had taken his conviction into his own hands and condemned himself. To every one it was clear that he was a changed man. Let him be a living witness to the hardships of transgression and the omnipotence of grace. She believed Willie would be glad that he should be pardoned. Willie was living where love and mercy reigned undimmed, and he would like for his old neighborhood to be as near like his present home as possible. All the names written up there with his own on the Lamb's Book of Life, would testify to the infinite reach and glory of Pardoning Mercy. She had heard all the arguments based upon the necessary protection of

society, but the great fact of true unfeigned penitence arose fair and clear and impressive above all this, and plead to her womanly heart with tones that could not be drowned. She thought that her old pastor and herself of all others, should be the first to plead for this criminal. I saw her eyes resting again and again on the picture of Willie above my study table. And she who was wounded worst of all, sat there and faced the terrible fact and sweetly plead the cause of him who by one fell blow had destroyed the brightest joy of her young existence.

She told me that she had first consulted Weston about the step she was contemplating. This was as it should be. She had now fallen into the habit of talking familiarly to her betrothed about every thing that concerned her former relationship with Willie. And my colleague's admiration for her grew day by day. Her heroic interest in the convict who had done her so much wrong, increased this feeling almost to reverence. Catherine had next consulted the attorney for the State, and he had encouraged her cordially—speaking of this as an exceptional case and one that might well appeal to Executive clemency. From the pleasing impressions made upon him at that conference, he was led to inquire of others the cause of her interest in the affair; and as soon as he received a hint of the truth, he became enthusiastic for the release of the prisoner. Lawyers sometimes have hearts as well as other people. I found that she had a

petition prepared for her by the attorney himself, and to which as its first signature she wanted to secure the name of the father of the assassinated boy. She did not mean to persuade. If the heart of the old man had not seconded her own, I suppose she would have dropped her purpose. Did I hesitate long? Often came up before me my witness-bearing against the looseness in the administration of the laws. It had, perhaps, been a hobby with me. But then again I knew that hobbies are dangerous things to the mental and moral equilibrium of those riding them. I think I can conscientiously say that I did not hesitate because the murderer's victim was my own boy. No, it was solely because of the fact that human life had grown too cheap in this poor nation of ours. The words of the Divine Law-book rang in my ears—"The land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed in it but by the blood of him that shed it." I deprecated, and I yet deprecate, the culpable habit in the people of signing every petition that may be brought to them praying for the life of a murderer. No, the remembered preciousness of my child had nothing to do with my hesitation. Independent of selfish motives, it was my regard for the peace and security of my fellow-men, and founded upon the wisdom of the Infinitely Wise.

Then I thought of Askin's part in the awful crime, exciting by miserable falsehoods the distracted man to the desperate deed. Gaines was only the frantic hand wielded by the baser

head and heart. I pittied the poor father driven wild by the loss of his little buried Sammy. Then I thought of the glorious Advocate of us all, pleading a month or two ago the cause of this very murderer at the bar of heaven and securing in His own name the free discharge from all his sins. I was glad that the prerogative of pardon is lodged in the governments of earth. Though often abused by men, it remains still as a faint shadow of that heavenly attribute without which none of us could ever have been welcomed within the gates. Even my own Willie could never have sat down beneath the celestial bowers, had there been no pardoning mercy.

The old preacher does not want to be misunderstood. He is as jealous as ever for the faithful execution of our criminal laws. He is not arguing the question. He is not claiming that he did right. He is only describing the rapid processes of his own mind in the presence of this lovely intercessor for the one who had so grievously wronged her. Oh, all ye who are joining me in admiration for my beautiful Catherine; ye who are not withholding from the noble woman the due meed of praise; oh, come with me to the highest standard of all and pause reverently among sweet thoughts of Him who amid the anguish of dissolution prayed for His own murderers, and who now commendeth His love toward us personally in that while we were yet sinners He died for us!

This aged hand signed the paper distinctly and without the shaking of a nerve; the first petition

of the kind and probably the last. The dear girl took the same pen and wrote her clear, smooth, feminine autograph. Willie's eyes looked down from the wall and seemed to witness the act. Mother Howe knew by instinct what was going on, and uttered her quiet approval in words divine, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy—Matt. v: 7."

Some while afterward I learned the subsequent history of the petition. The deliberate Catherine managed it all herself. Without difficulty she secured the signatures of the officers of the court. Working diligently all day, through fair weather as well as foul, she obtained the names of the entire church; all at least excepting the little clique affiliating with the school-house 'community.' Askins was busy in stirring up their opposition, and over in that quarter was heard, of course, the customary buzzing.

Attended by the prosecuting attorney, Catherine went to the capital of the State, and sought the Governor. Strange to say, he was a gentleman and a Christian. For once, immortality and Universalism and profanity and semi-infidelity had failed to be enthroned in the gubernatorial chair. His Thanksgiving proclamations were no mockery. The executive mansion was not a place for gambling and Sabbath-breaking and drunken carousal. A decent woman was safe within its doors. And the good man intuitively recognized the worth of this growth of our country gardens. Though taken

for the time from its quiet country shades to the halls of courtly splendor, the violet still gave forth its fragrance. The charm of goodness was still a power. The Governor felt the spell of ladyhood.

And yet the conscientious man was careful. He was set for the punishment of evil doers, and he must act under a strict sense of accountability to man and to God. She presented the case clearly and submitted it to his wise discretion, asking him to take his own time and answer her at the hotel. Unknown to her, a letter arrived from the Judge telling his friend the Governor the facts of Catherine's connection with the case. The next day he called upon her and placed the pardon in her hands.

"May the great Executive of the universe bless you," he said. "While men court promotion and fame, God has his own nobler hearts scattered here and there among the obscure homes of the people a thousand times better than we all. These purer bosoms, the godly mothers and wives and sisters, these are the hope of our institutions. Coveting no publicity, asking no ballot, they live their useful lives and shape the State, moulding its voters, staying their degeneracy, and regenerating society at its fountain head. What would become of our nation were it not for this sound substratum of true, modest, womanly hearts? The shadow of a thousand penitentiaries and the terror of a thousand gibbets cannot work the change in a bad man's heart like the prayers and smiles of one good woman. I am glad to have met you. Go

back and let the prisoner out. Pardon me, but were all the women of our country Catherine Mays, we would have but little need of prisons."

She could not see why the great man should address her in such words. Embarrassed for the first time, but thanking him, she turned away to hasten home with the precious document. The day of execution had been hurrying on. It seemed to bear no terror to Gaines. To all that visited him he had been talking more and more of the love of the Savior, and of the approaching privilege of looking upon the face of Him who forgave the thief upon the cross. His little boy appeared to be getting nearer to him every hour. He loved to tell about incidents in Sammy's childhood, and then to speak of the day, the day upon the gallows, when he would bound away and join the happy child in the skies. He wondered if Sammy and Willie knew each other in heaven, and if he would find them playing together beneath the boughs of the tree of life. When he thought of the old preacher and Catherine, he would grow sad and mourn for the desolation he had wrought in their lives; marveling at the long-suffering of his God and of the goodness which could open the everlasting gates to an assassin. How wonderful that the blood of a murdered Savior could wash out the blood of murder from fiendish hands like his!

Weston and Catherine, handsome in their plighted faith, came together to the prison with the Governor's pardon in their hands. "You

two always bring new daylight," said Gaines. "It is as if the sun and moon should rise side by side and each one brighten and soften the other. Every time you come, it gets easier for Tom to think about Jesus. Only another week and I will trouble you no more. And I mean to die praying that, for you all, the world may grow as bright as if there had never been any Tom Gaines in it."

And then they told him everything about it. At first his mind refused to grasp the thought. It was with him a matter of course and a desirable thing that he should die. The possibility of anything else had never occurred to him. But there was the seal of State! When he fully grasped the idea, he utterly repelled the paper — just as the awakened sinner at first repells the proffered grace of heaven. The penalty of the violated law must be endured. It was his only way to atone to society for his outrage upon their peace. It was the only satisfaction he could render for the wrong done to the old preacher and to Catherine. Weston told him that the old preacher's name was the first and Catherine's the second upon the petition which had secured his release. Then the strong man broke down in tears. He who had faced death without a tremor now shook and staggered with uncontrollable sobs. At the thought of so great and unmerited favor the depths were broken up; and for awhile they left him alone with his thoughts.

After a little the jailor came and told him he was free. At first he would not go out. He was

afraid it would be a sin. Even his religious scruples still held to the idea that some punishment must be borne before he could hope for the full favor of Heaven. Tom is not the only Christian who has been found lingering in that prison house. How the old legality clings to the soul of even the truly regenerate! Self insists upon having some hand in the great atonement and suffering a part of the penalty due to sin. I suppose that Gaines had been really looking forward to the gallows as a work that would help to save him. Though trusting in Jesus as his friend, he had not entirely divested himself of the hope of paying part of the price himself. Weston urged the all-sufficiency of Christ. As the old preacher's name and Catherine's were upon the plea which secured an unconditional pardon from man, so the name of the injured Jesus was upon the plea which secured him an unconditional pardon from the courts of heaven. As the officer had just opened the prison doors without requiring any merit on the part of Gaines, so trusting solely in Jesus he could go out free from all charges against him even by the justice of God. Like the seal of State, the seal of heaven was his complete release. Like many growing Christians he seemed to discover afresh the freeness of undeserved salvation, and at this new revelation he was again convulsed with sobs. How we learn again and again the fullness and blessedness of grace! Softened, surprised, at peace, Tom Gaines went out of his double prison.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ANOTHER ROMANCE.

We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one that is uncircumcised; for that is a reproach to us.—*Genesis xxxiv: 14.*

OVER to the West of us a few miles distant, was a rural village containing a thousand souls or more, and pluming itself upon the posession of dignities incorporate. It had taken to itself an ancient name and seemed to be seeing through liquid spectacles and desiring to appear venerable and lofty. It was a very religious little village and lifted its four or five spires towards heaven most adoringly. One of these churches swelled itself to very imposing proportions and persuaded itself that it owned the stores, the streets, the court-house, the school-house, the county and the nation. It was moreover a very worldly little village, aping city airs, extravagant in dress, full of millinery, effecting metropolitan balls, and exhausting the utmost capacities of the livery stables on its Lord's Days. It was withal a very conceited little village, boasting its good society, parading its liter-

ary pretentions, and eloquent of its reputed wealth. The aspirations of the little village were far-reaching and lofty and it verily believed itself without a peer.

A singular hallucination possessed the little village. This singular hallucination connected itself with an irregular so-called river which circled its way around one side of the extensive suburbs. All the young villagers were trained up to believe that this stream also bounded the Heavenly Canaan and was somehow identified with the Bible river the streams whereof were to make glad the city of God. None of them could ever hope to enter the Promised Land without at least one dip beneath the surface of that magic river. Its waters were more efficacious than Pharpar, Abana, and Jordan, all put together. Every sort of spiritual leprosy was cured there, and full many an obedient Naaman henceforth walked the pavements in conscious purity of soul, and thought of no other preparation for that city whose streets are gold. That little classic stream was a fit emblem of the religion of the village, now rushing on in frothing turbulent tide, now subsiding into stagnant malarious pools. But whatever its condition, one dip with every hair and toe submerged, was an indispensable requisite for securing a place of final rest beside the pure river of water of life clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In fact in the minds of many of the inhabitants there was evidently a junction effected somewhere between these two sacred streams. Hence,

the ambitious little village took the royal name of Rabbah, the city of waters. (2 Sam. xii: 27).

One of the citizens of this privileged village had looked with favor upon one of our choicest maidens. I had noticed before that, among the sons of Ishmael, there seemed to be an especial predilection for wives of a Presbyterian origin. Whether it is upon the principle that opposites attract, I cannot tell. Or whether they depart again at convenience from their characteristic disregard of the older Scriptures and remember with feelings of emulation the device of the weak tribe of Benjamin for filling up their depleted ranks by seizing for wives the daughters of Shiloh, I cannot tell. But somehow there seemed to be a wonderful and apparently irresistible attraction toward our bonny sweet lassies. An impression appears to have gained currency among all denominations that they make the best of wives. Said an old man of another Church to me: "I have been married four times and I was fortunate enough to get a Presbyterian every time. If the way opens I shall marry four more—and a Presbyterian always!"

And now Mr. Amfibius Swain looked covetingly upon our lovely Mary Sheldon. The children's charming favorite had charmed one who did not think himself a child. He came to our unpretentious country neighborhood with all the prestige of a leading beau of Rabbah. He was understood to be possessed of considerable fortune, so that of course the wealth of the Sheldons had nothing to

do with guiding him in this direction. He was a man of some education and of considerable social advantages, and was able to make his presence very acceptable at the elegant mansion. His manners and address were attractive. Altogether he was a good looking man, and they were a good-looking couple.

But, with an old man's natural interest in his young people, I own that I was not pleased. I had myself received Mary into the church, and she had been a good girl. The temptations of opulence had not spoiled her. The world had failed to draw off her heart from Christ. As the teacher of our large infant class, beloved by them all and admired by rich and poor, she was probably doing as much good as any of us. I knew the time must come when suitors would hover about her. Her position in society, her father's possessions, and her own personal attractiveness, would make her a shining mark. I knew it must come; and I was fearful that it might be one who would not love her for her own sake and who would not evoke her capabilities for usefulness in the Gospel vineyard. And now when I saw that sparkling young woman leaning, apparantly well pleased, upon the arm of Mr. Amfibius Swain and smiling up into his complacent face, I acknowledge that I grew jealous and sober and ill-content.

The girls—Heaven bless the dear creatures! —seem to have developed no greater aversion to marrying than in the days when I was young

However bright their surroundings, however true the hearts that would gladden their way, they *will* think of the gallant young lover, the lips that tell of devotion, the altar where two are made one, the cot where the roses blow and the jasmine embowers the window. It has been and must be, and we must rejoice in the beauty of it and sadden in the bitterness of it, till we reach the shining climes where there is no marrying or giving in marriage. We old folks will stand apart and invoke God's smiles upon youug maidens' dreams hoping and praying that there may be no dissappointments and no mismating.

There were two things which discomposed me from the beginning. The visits of Mr. Amfibius Swain were all made to our neighborhood on Sundays—or Lord's Days as he insisted upon calling them. On these days he was one of the most highly appreciated patrons of the livery stable. By the ringing of the church-bell, his favorite coursers discerned the arrival of their busiest hours. Of late, they began by instinct to take a certain road, and the glossy buggy and the two handsome claybanks found their way without trouble to the sumptuous stables of the Sheldon mansion. For the honor of Presbyterianism and the God of Presbyterianism, I did not like these displays every Sabbath afternoon. Our families were not used to it. There were six days besides for the entertainment of company, and on any of those six days the hospitable doors of the

people swung musically upon their hinges. On the pearl of days, the Savior was expected as the only guest. And I was not satisfied that the Lord's-day customs of Rabbah should be imported into our old-fashioned community. I wondered what Mary thought.

A second consideration troubled me. At home Mr. Amfibius Swain never thought of entering any church but his own. He had conscientious scruples against encouraging the sects. His habit was to conspicuously ignore their existence. But when he visited the Sheldon mansion he slighted his fellow believers at the School House entirely, and exhibited no hesitation in attending the fascinating Presbyterian girl over to our emphatically Calvinistic conventicle. My old brain was puzzled to understand how the distance of a few miles could make such a difference in a man's habits or at least in his principles. To aggravate the inconsistency, he professed to the seemingly credulous Mary that he was delighted with our preacher, with our music, with our mode of worship, and with everything. One might have hoped that a wholesome transformation was taking place within him under the influence of our salubrious Presbyterian atmosphere, were it not for the discouraging fact that immediately upon his return to Rabbah he became as bigoted and intolerant as ever. And I wondered if Mary knew.

One day when the sun was about an hour from the horizon, the glossy buggy with the claybanks

wheeled itself rapidly up to the parsonage gate; and Mr. Amfibius Swain and the captivating Mary came in to call upon the old preacher. The blushes were playing through her cheek most enchantingly and her eyes as dangerously bright as I had ever seen them. I could hardly blame the man who wanted to win all this loveliness for his own. He succeeded remarkably well in adapting himself to his company. He talked much of ecclesiastical affairs, spoke of our late revival, lauded Mr. Weston, and congratulated me upon the prosperity of our church. I tried to forget his exclusiveness in Rabbah and his denial of the possibility of salvation to all who refused to submit to the rigid ritualism of his own narrow creed. He certainly meant to produce a favorable impression, and yet I fancied that he was not as much at ease in my presence as I tried to make him. When they were leaving, Miss Sheldon secured an opportunity while he was arranging the horses, to say that she would soon be over to have a private talk with me. A little embarrassed smile was playing about her mouth most bewitchingly, and that little embarrassed smile made me very unhappy. I was not willing to the match, and it would be impossible for me to disguise it. Such marriages are seldom blessed. I was afraid that Mary was coming to tell of an engagement and a wedding day; possibly to invite me to perform a ceremony which would be to my heart little short of sacrilege. The more I had

seen of life and the more I saw of Mr. Amfibius Swain, the more I was convinced that Presbyterians are wisest when they marry Presbyterians.

My old housekeeper was clearly of the same mind. The glossy buggy and the claybanks were flashing out of sight when I heard these words distinctly from the kitchen,—"An abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord which He loved and hath married the daughter of a strange god—Malachi two and eleventh." Mother Howe had thought the matter through. "In those days saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon and of Moab; and their children spake half in the language of Ashdod—Nehemiah thirteen, twenty-third and twenty-fourth." "Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or wealth forever—Ezra nine and twelfth."

It was only a few days afterward when the sparkling Mary was seated with the old preacher in his study. A little bashful, a little coy, but as attractive as ever. I saw her wonderful power for good if placed under favorable auspices. I could not bear that all this should be blighted. Nor did I wonder that our ladies were at a premium in the matrimonial market. Mary was assuredly an enviable prize. And gracing her other charms, I could never see her without thinking of her love for the little ones. "My dear old pastor," she said, "I've come to tell you a secret. It seems

so strange, that I don't yet half believe it myself. I am going to tell you, in order to get myself convinced of the truth of it. The best way I know to get the scare off, is to tell you at once that I am going to be married!"

It made me half sick. To think of all this loveliness, all this freshness of soul, all this vivacity of disposition, all this hopefulness, all this girlish piety, passing under the trials that were before her in Rabbah, the slurs upon her Church, the well-aimed flings at her faith, the constant efforts to wear out her fidelity to her principles, the deteriorating social influences brought to bear upon her daily, the frowns of her proselyting husband and his proselyting friends, the continual influx of error upon mind and heart, the ingenius harrassments so skillfully devised against all that she once held sacred,—the picture arose before me most revoltingly, and for her sake I could have wept. Trustful, confiding, unaware of the corroding besetments before her, I saw her yielding her happiness to the keeping of a man who absolutely *had no respect for her principles!* How could the result be otherwise than deplorable! But of course I could not say this to her.

"You do not congratulate me," she continued. "You would have me marry one of my own faith. I saw *that* very well when we were here the other day. Am I not right?"

She was determined to force out of me an expression of opinion. Who could resist her? And

yet it was now too late, and I would be careful. But I dare not compromise my honest convictions.

"Marriage is a very solemn thing, Mary. There is always in this step a risk of happiness and of the soul's higher interests. Occasional differences of sentiment and of judgment are certain to arise even in the lives of the best suited couples; yes, without rashly marrying a permanent difference. I suppose there have been cases where husband and wife were members of different churches, and still have been happy. I hope so. But I believe they would have been happier if agreed in their Church preferences. The risk appears to me fearfully great when a man and woman deliberately wed a deep, decided, life long dividing sentiment. The more diverse the Churches, the more dangerous the experiment, and the greater the possibilities of antagonism between husband and wife. But I am repaying you badly for your pleasant confidence, my child. I will not prophesy of a cloud any more."

"But you do not want me to engage myself to Mr. Amfibius Swain," she queried roguishly.

"Are you not engaged to him?" I asked, surprised.

"Not yet," she answered. "I intended to know all you felt about it first."

I was encouraged. She was still free. She asked my counsel, and I was resolved to be faithful to this good woman.

"Mary," I said, "I once had in this happy home a Mary of my own; and in this very room I begged

her to pause and turn away from her suitor's words. I will talk to you as gently and as tenderly as I plead with her. Though I failed to save her happiness, I would rejoice to save yours. If I speak earnestly it is because I have great fears. In seeking a life-partner outside of our own communion, the firm, conscientious, high-toned Presbyterian invites trouble and weariness and heartache. Our divergence is so marked, our principles so distinctive, our home education so peculiarly our own that they cannot possibly be brought into the same house with their opposites without attrition. I would dread this wear and tear of soul as I would dread the daily gnawing of the vulture of Prometheus. Other denominations undoubtedly give us good men and women, but it is of their own especial type and after their own kind. Perfect congeniality can never follow such diverse training and contrasted traditions. Incompatibility of religious views and temperament will be a constant snag in the course of the matrimonial barque. Sensible persons under such circumstances must agree to disagree, but even that does not put aside the abiding *consciousness* of divergence. There it ever stands, recognized and deplored and dreaded, yawning widely between! Approaching that line, delicate souls shrink back, afraid, and careful and with bated breath. Approaching that line, indelicate souls froth and bicker and fight. Along that line, Mary Sheldon's spirit would weary and faint and fret itself because of evil doers."

"I expect you are right," replied the attentive maiden, candidly, but with not such indications of seriousness as I had a right to anticipate. "Your long life of confidences, forced upon you like mine, has given you many opportunities for witnessing the results of foolish marriages."

"Long observation has made me very jealous for the prudent mating of Presbyterian girls. From their superior position in society and their personal worth, they stand as conspicuous game for those who hate the Church but covet the Church's daughters. Two cases of sad matrimonial misadventure rise now before my mind. One of the best Christian girls I ever knew married under apparent promises of happiness; but out of the Church. I suppose most of the congratulations of the bride that day, were honest except my own. I feared as I always fear, under such unpropitious circumstances. It was not long before the siege commenced. It was first by social attentions and bribes in the way of kindnesses and blandishments and enticements and flatteries. These transparent lures to inveigle her from her faith and get her into their Church, were very repulsive to a woman of sensibility and fixed principles, but the baits came from her husband's friends and she had to endure them. When these expedients had failed, they entered upon a system of petty persecutions very annoying to a refined nature—representing that she was not attentive to her domestic duties, that she was not encouraging her husband in his relig-

ious life, that she was a drag upon his popularity and success in business, and that she did not make him a happy home. I suppose he encouraged these things. He was chagrined that she was not easily brought over to his views as he had expected and boasted, and he grew cold toward her at home and did not protect her abroad. The children saw all this and were sometimes upon the one side and sometimes upon the other. They heard their father positively forbid her to teach them the Catechism or to utter a single word in favor of the sound doctrines so dear to Evangelical Christians. In a thousand ways known only to such uncongenial circles, the heart of the woman was tried and vexed until her spirit was broken and conquered. For the sake of domestic peace, but against her firm convictions of the truth, and really without the respect of those who pretended to rejoice over her sudden conversion, she went through the empty form of an immersion into the Church of her husband. And then the usual jubilation over the capture of an unhappy Presbyterian pervert was heard far and wide."

"You spoke of two such cases," said Mary thoughtfully. And I was encouraged.

"The other never forsook the Church of her fathers. They could neither drive nor seduce her away. There was nevertheless a change, perhaps just as sad. When she married, she was one of the most decidedly pious ladies in the community —a zealous, efficient, consistent worker in the

church. In a little while she dropped away from the Sunday-School. There was no way provided for her to attend and she had to give it up. For some time she struggled to keep faithful to her prayer-meetings, but the same causes gradually wore out her heroic purpose. Then there was an occasional absence from the Sunday-night service, and then she was not there at all. She kept up her attendance upon the Sabbath morning preaching pretty well, but we saw that the fervor and unction of her piety had evaporated from her life. No true Gospel help at home, no vital godliness in her companion, no wholesome inspiration from his daily life, but coldness instead and error and ritualistic formality, imperceptibly to herself she sunk toward his level in spirituality and for all positive good was as truly lost to our Church as the other. I do not know that her husband was ever intentionally unkind to her, but the chilling blight of a mismatched faith rested heavily upon her soul. Her name remained with us, but her better self was gone. In these two instances I believe I have given fair representative cases of this great evil."

"I have no doubt of it," she answered. "I wish all the young ladies in the land could hear you talk. And all the Presbyterian young men too," she added; "for perhaps you would persuade them to be in more haste to hunt up Presbyterian wives. And then we girls need not be dependent for proposals upon heretics."

"Our young men could not do better," I answered. She was cheerful and smiling, and I would be cheerful too. Yet I could have wished that she had taken my words more seriously. "No, they could not do better. In order to his highest good, a Presbyterian young man needs a Presbyterian wife just as badly as for her highest good she needs a Presbyterian husband. Our gentlemen make a great mistake when they permit themselves to become so fascinated in other circles as to forget the more exalted charms of moral worth. Every Presbyterian community is full of young ladies who would make the noblest of wives, and happy are they that know it!"

"Would you advise our young preachers in the same direction?"

Was the charming girl quizzing me? I replied —"Yes, my child, most assuredly. In all earnestness, I would tremble for one of our preachers who would go outside of his own Church and among her enemies and traducers, to find the woman who is to help and cheer and encourage by her piety and sympathy through all his ministerial work. Can he expect encouragement and inspiration from her who has been born and bred and drilled into prejudice against his own denomination? More than anything else, the young pastor needs for a helpmeet one who has grown up among the molding influences of mother Church and taken shape from her ennobling doctrines and usages. God's law for His priesthood was—'He

shall take a virgin of his own people to wife.' Lev. xxi: 14. And I can stand here at my window and point to the Mays', the Ansons', the Phaleses, and the Sheldons' where there are waiting as eligible wives for our preachers as can be found anywhere in the land?"

"I am glad you think so; and I am delighted that you can recommend us," rejoined the winsome Mary; "for as soon as the outfit is secured, I expect to become the dear little wife of the pastor of Bachelorville church. He has been wise enough to ask me, and I have been wise enough not to say no."

The bonny little witch! She had managed the surprise very adroitly, in order to get my endorsement upon the marriage of which her loving heart was so full. She did not tell me, but it was a fact that Mr. Amfibius Swain had proposed and been rejected. The glossy buggy and the handsome claybanks broke the Sabbath upon our roads no more. Mr. Amfibius Swain loathed the sprinkling Presbyterians worse than ever, and would gladly have *drowned* them beneath the waters of Rabbah. That meeting of our Presbytery was still working good. The timid pastor of Bachelorville church and all the little children there, will thank God for it until their dying day. Mary's own good sense had saved her from needing my solicitude and my sage words of counsel, and therefore can quietly pass them over to the hearts of my thoughtful readers; for out of the revelations of a long experience I protest that every word is true!

CHAPTER XXXVI.

FERNS AND CRYSTALS.

And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges.—*Luke xiv: 23.*

AFTER the defeated abduction of Rose Arton, the stranger had withdrawn from the neighborhood. Except the part of the ruse explained by Tom Gaines, the matter remained involved in mystery. Gaines was sure that the object of the plot was to black-mail the Ansons. He knew one of the men but not the other. That night's trouble had been revealed to Catherine only. Rose had kept it sacredly from Willy. Weston had told her that the purpose was to extort money, not to injure her; and that as they had signally failed, they would be afraid to molest her any further. Remembering the sums she had previously advanced, she found no difficulty in accepting the solution of the mystery and believing that she had been the victim of a well-arranged fraud.

And yet at times the hope then excited of learning something about her parentage, would

come back to her and she would dream her dreams about father and mother over again. There had been a greater disappointment than she would own to herself. Her new love for her Savior helped her to rest content in her lot; and more especially when her brother also came to Christ and left the old bitterness and unhappiness behind. He told her afterward all about his visit to Askins and the two rejoiced together in the grace that had sustained him and subdued his temper. They felt that, though orphans, they had a heavenly Father who cared for them and was shaping their lives as would be best. Now and then, while looking into her mirror, Rose would think yearningly of her mother's face; but she would, ere long, find her way to Aunt Lydia's side and put her arm affectionately about the motherly substitute whom God had given in place of her own. Perhaps in that small circle, as little of harm was done or said or felt or thought as anywhere beneath the sun. The windows of heaven were open continually to the incense of prayer going up from these rooms. And the love of Allen and Lydia, hallowed by piety and supplication, was almost as the love of those who have begotten and brought up children.

A month after Christmas, if you had penetrated into the screened opening running back from The Gorge, you would have noticed a little column of smoke issuing from the mouth of the cave which we once visited, and dissolving away among the

trees. A man, more worn and haggard than when we saw him last, is hovering close to the fire. All over him are signs of decrepitude; and, although well protected by this natural retreat, every time the cold air strikes him he shivers.

"This is hard," he muttered. "I can't stand it long, and I am not caring if I don't. I have used the world badly, and the world has paid me back. What a chance for happiness I had once! I flung it away. And the chances are gone now—temporal and eternal. I have only to eke out a miserable existence till I die. Here I am in want, while this whole neighborhood is surfeited with abundance. That girl would help me, but like all the rest of my opportunities, I threw that away. Her heart is kind and generous, and she was working into my hands nicely. In an unfortunate hour I allowed myself to be persuaded by a worse man than I am; and now I have no hold upon her. After that outrage, she would be foolish to listen to me; and then, too, she has a friend who has showed himself able to protect her. I have forfeited her confidence, but she is my only hope. She is too good to let anybody want bread. What is to be done?"

The sun had set and the darkness had begun to gather. Another form, somewhat muffled, came carefully up the little winding approach. Him, too, we have seen there before. They greet as acquaintances, but perhaps not as cordially as formerly.

"You are sensible in coming back," said the last. "We need not care to own a richer mine, if you will only blast and dig it. You will be very foolish to suffer privation. They dote on the children; they can be easily imposed upon; they can be made to accede to any terms rather than that harm should come to the orphans. But it will require heroic measures."

"And I have reason to dread your heroic measures," returned the other. "All was moving on well enough. The girl obedient, the money coming, my few wants provided for. And I liked her, and she was not afraid of me. You got up your ugly strategem and spoiled it all. I was never willing to frighten her."

"It would all have been well but for that preacher. A pretty preacher, too, to put himself in any such undignified, unclerical position! My time of settlement with him will come, and that before many months. He has braved me a long time, and intends to strike another blow by turning me out of the church. What do I care for his old church after it no longer subserves my purposes! I mean to be square with him some day. As a beginning, I know a plan by which to help you, benefit myself, and annoy him."

"He is a cool, brave man," suggested the stranger.

"Yes, a pretty specimen of a minister of the Gospel of peace! And it is as a minister I expect to worry and out-general him."

"He seems to be wonderfully shrewd and deliberate," was the reply.

"No matter; listen to me," persisted the other. Such commendation of Weston vexed him. "Since you have been away, running in cowardice from your fortune, there has been a so-called revival in the church. The preachers are greatly elated and very proud of their young converts. The Arton children both joined. Of course the Ansons are delighted. They will do anything to prevent these two young people from being harassed, lest they might lose their religion! The twins are very sensitive about their birth. I drove the boy almost to distraction by playing upon that string. If you will join me, I believe we can again arouse their pride, excite their tempers, prejudice society against them, and drive them out of the community. I have been watching Weston, and sometimes I came to the conclusion that he loved Rose fully as well as he loved old man May's daughter. However that may be, he is interested in the orphans for the honor of the church into which he dragged them. If the children are defamed and routed, you can fleece the Ansons in a hundred ways for their support or for a knowledge of their whereabouts or to get them back. The first thing is clearly to establish the fact of their low birth."

"But they were well-born," said the stranger.

"That does not matter. Anything can be proved nowadays. I have never been defeated in getting abroad any rumor I pleased. Every-

body in the community will help. You and I can arrange the story so that all will assist in circulating it, and, after awhile, nobody doubt. Their own best church-members will be our allies in blackening the record."

The speaker laughed heartily over the help which the scandal-monger receives from those who ought to be too conscientious and too judicious to play into his hands by countenancing and giving currency to evil gossip.

"I don't like the looks of your deviltry," answered the man, with a repetition of the shiver. "I believe I feel at times the air from my grave."

His companion smiled derisively.

"I feel, now and then, the air from my grave," repeated the other. "Food will not be needed long. I will have to think awhile before I consent to worry that girl anymore. Perhaps it will have to be done. Of course I must have bread and clothes. This winter seems bent upon killing me. I am not anxious to plunge into any further wickedness. There has been too much of it already to make dying pleasant. You are a scoundrel to be advising a distracted, needy man this way. But I had a choice of my company once, and you are the kind I chose. When sin starts a man going down, he is very weak in his efforts to stop. Of course I must eat. You have, therefore, the advantage of my better impulse, and you know it. I will think of what you have said. You had better leave me to myself."

A fit of coughing had come on and he went farther back into the cavern. The visitor muffled himself closer and retraced his steps, sneering at cowards and conscience as he went.

The next morning, with his hand full of gathered ferns for his betrothed, Weston entered the same recess and was searching among the cedar-clad rocks. I never remember to have met a man who was more fond of natural scenery or enjoyed more richly the revelations of natural science. And I am sure that his sermons suffered nothing from these tastes and studies. The book of Proverbs and of Ecclesiastes and the wonderful Song, are none the worse because of the wise man's knowledge of Botany, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall. During these days, Catherine shared the pleasure of not a few scientific discoveries made by the young pastor in the country around. And often the Professor also was called to examine his specimens. After the demonstration against Rose, Weston had directed his rambles very frequently through The Gorge, former occurrences convincing him that the unknown was finding a hiding-place somewhere among these broken cliffs. He had finally discovered the cave and was sure that here had been the place of concealment; but the man was gone. Occasionally he continued to take that path, sometimes in the day, sometimes by moonlight, not knowing but the stranger might return. His purpose was to be

on the alert and prevent any further distress to the orphan. To-day, while unearthing a beautiful crystal, he heard a fit of coughing, and, turning to the sound, he saw the little pillar of smoke. He forgot his crystals and went immediately toward the cave.

Weston found the man pressing near to the fire, muttering to himself, and shivering at the noise of the winter blasts. On discovering the minister, he seemed startled. Weston spoke to him at once and in as kind tones as he could. "You must not be afraid of me. I believe you need a friend. These are cold nights and threaten to be worse. You are looking almost sick, and the hand of friendship may be very pleasant after awhile. I would love to do you all the good I can."

"You think you have seen me before," said the stranger.

"I know I have seen you before. You ought not to have troubled that poor child. The attempt was very cruel. I saw that you relented. I tell you, frankly, that I do not believe you were as much to blame as another who was with you."

This was very adroit. The haggard man was pleased. He replied — "I was sorry that we attempted to scare her. She seems to be a good girl, and perhaps I had it in my power to make her happy instead of miserable. Yes, I am bad enough — God knows! — but I do believe you are right in thinking that my company was even worse

than myself that foolish night. You have sought me for a purpose. What is it?"

"Yes, I have two purposes; I want to be your friend, and I want, also, to save those young people from any further molestation. I am determined to guard them at all costs, but I want to do it pleasantly. This community once aroused, the orphans' wrongs would not lack avengers. But we will not think of that. You must first let me help you, and then you must aid me in standing between the twins and all harm. I believe you will promise me that you will not take any step against that girl without first conferring with me; and that you will not permit any one else to use you for that end."

"I am not used to talking with preachers"— answered the unknown. "But you seem to approach me just like any other honest man. I feel like promising you. But, then, she might be induced to supply me bread. What am I to do?"

"God will supply you bread. The world has evidently used you roughly, and now you are unable to battle against it. You are weak and almost sick. Try God's people for friends. God sees you need them. Our Master was once worse off than your neighbors the foxes, and, like yourself, had not where to lay His head. He feels for you. He tells His children to provide for the poor. Here is some money until we make better arrangements. Accept it as sent you by your Savior. Try to think of Him as interested in your future good."

The countenance of the man certainly softened a little. "I hardly know how to listen to religious talk. I used to hear it, in sweeter tones than yours, but I repelled and scouted it. It came from as holy lips as ever breathed. But such thoughts unman me. Don't waste religious breath on one like me!"

"Remember, that through the mercy of God, you shall not now suffer from hunger or unkindness. Have nothing to do with the bad man who misled you before. Tell him that I am going to visit you often, and that Tom Gaines and myself will watch him. I will care for you as tenderly as a brother; and if the time comes when you must give up these secret haunts, I will secure you a home and attention. And be sure to think of this as coming from your Savior."

The hoarse cough again racked his frame and he edged nearer to the flames.

"You are not well enough to remain all alone. I will see you to-morrow. You spoke of the possibility of your helping to make those orphans happy. Think of it, and speak to me freely as soon as you are willing. Meanwhile, I am sure that you will promise me not to interfere with them again for evil?"

"I promise you," he said, extending his shriveled hand.

"I like that man," he murmured to himself as Weston passed out of sight — Passed away, forgetting both his crystals and his ferns.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

JOB'S OSTRICH.

But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man.

Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.*

And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for a woman to speak in the church.

The head of the woman is the man.

—*God through Paul and Moses.*

ANOTHER preacher was advertised far and wide. The greatest one yet. The School House set must have a sensation. That was their type of humanity, representing a class of religionists all over the broad land. Without a sensation, the altars of the School House would cease to burn. Deprive them for awhile of a sensation, and there would be nothing left. A quiet, consistent, sober life of faith and obedience and growth in grace, was no religion at all. For a mighty stir they invoke the Apostles of holiness; then the great Darby Plym; then the invincible Baptow; and now the most consummate sensation of all, a

*He shall rule over thee.

veritable female Boanerges! A preacher, but no black cloth coat, no pantaloons, no whiskers, no vote at the polls. A poor oppressed woman, but nevertheless one that was lauded and flattered and feasted and petted by thousands of applauding admirers. One of the down-trodden martyrs among the subjugated sex, but one mighty in the Gospel and elevated far above the dominant males by the unqualified endorsement of Heaven; even the illustrious and saintly Mrs. McManish.

As little as we disturbed the outside world, the outside world was determined not to let our insignificant selves alone. None of us need hope that the issues of the day will spare us because of our retired localities. Their very nature is aggressive and their course ever onward. They mean to possess the country. They expect to permeate society, subordinate the ballot, and wield the churches. We need not try to remain indifferent spectators of the battle between conservatism and the progressives as already joined. The mistake will be great if we securely dream that the conflict will always be muffled in the distance. These spiritual humbugs are already reaching out their long antennæ and feeling our defenses. Through a hundred expedients the blatant propagandism advances steadily and assiduously upon our latitudes.

As one of its expedients, it had awhile ago dressed itself in petticoats and exerted its strategy against our neighborhood in the form of a woman's

right's lecture to be delivered for the enlightenment of our enslaved wives and daughters. It was placarded everywhere. Every thing was done to provoke curiosity. Curiosity is always the ally upon which all such unscriptural visionaries first count in order to secure a hearing. It was to be incontrovertibly demonstrated that women must vote. Must vote in order to get bread. Must vote in order to get righteous laws. Must vote in order to obtain an education. Must vote in order to overthrow her tyrants. I suppose the poor woman proved it conclusively to the minds of the lower grades of society who went to hear her. Our pitiably enthralled ladies, comprising all the intelligence and refinement of the community, stayed away. So also their cruel masculine despots. In the dregs of our society she had before her a fair specimen of those whom she would lead to the polls. They were enthusiastic in applause; but, poor things, the lecture did not result very well financially and she would not remain to instruct and elevate the ignorant of her sex any further. All the purer and nobler womanhood of our community resented the stigma put upon its true sphere and proudly turned away from her degrading theories and her unwholesome presence; just as true womanhood will ever turn away from the filth and mire of the hustings and the ballot. The good name of our neighborhood was vindicated.

The first exhibition of this female mania in a religious direction, occurred in one of our prayer-meetings. In conducting the exercises, I was asking from time to time without designating any particular person, "Will some brother lead us in prayer?" Unconsciously to myself, I happened once to change the form of request and say, "Will some one lead us in prayer?" The words had hardly escaped my lips when with a sudden dash and to the surprise of us all, Mrs. Marston burst forth in squeaking voice and rasped out her shrill petitions toward the ceiling. Her supplications were frequently interpersed with apologies and explanations to the people; but with none to Almighty God. Many were shocked at this unwomanly attempt to force an objectionable custom upon an unwilling people. The solemnity of the evening was gone. The old preacher was for a moment visibly embarrassed; and during that moment the words came full and distinct from the lips of the rugged Phales—"May the Lord of the Sanctuary not charge against our worship this grave indecency and Bible shame!" Out of the incident, of which undoubtedly she was very proud, Mrs. Marston endeavored to make capital and get up the cry of martyrdom; but the staid neighbors failed to be moved and she subsided into contempt.

A second attempt had been made upon our church by a visiting brother from another part of the country. In many respects his was an unfor-

tunate part of the country. It was a part of the country sadly restless under whatever was venerable in age or divine in religion; while it was easily enamored of everything that was new or startling, or latitudinarian or revolutionary. It was an especially unfortunate part of the country with regard to the jumbling of sexes—the women being all ambitious to be men, and the men all co senting to be women. I give the form of the rumor as it reached our unsophisticated far-away neighborhood. We were entirely too distant from the great centres of civilization for any of us, either male or female, to be distressed for being of the sex to which the Supreme Manager thought best to appoint us.

There are persons so constituted that they can not quietly hold an opinion of their own without trying to force it upon somebody else. Whether it be bread or stone, or fish or scorpion, our children have got to eat it. This was the character of our visiting brother. We must have our daughters as well as our sons to prophesy. Everything depended upon their talent to talk. The church would never go forward one step unless we had our ladies to talk. Of course he would not have them all in the pulpit—that was another thing. But no one could have any objection to their addressing the Sabbath-school and the Prayer-meetings. We were losing a great moral power. We were dragging far behind the times. Our women were failing to develope their gift of

speech and therefore to perform their one great mission. They were, rusting out in inefficiency. Bring them out! bring them out!

"No, no, my fast brother," said old John Phales. "We have no ambition to bring them out. In the power of innate feminine modesty, they are doing their quiet womanly work. We do not care to bring them out of that. Just because their winning tones are not cracked by public harangues, they are listened to with greater respect in private. We are not inclined to bring them out of that. Mother Howe scatters her Scripture seed as effectually as you do; Lydia Anson lives a useful life of silent prayer; Catherine May is constantly leading souls to Christ; and Sally Phales has made her husband better and purer, and raised as good a family of men and women as any matron in the nation. We do not want to bring them out of that. Our women work within the Bible law and love to stay within it. We will not countenance the nice distinctions and stealthy sophistries by which you would set your trap and lessen our respect for the plain declarations of God. We intend to watch the beginnings of evil by which you would gradually open the floodgates and let the muddy torrent of false ethics in upon our families. Now, my fast brother, if you want to argue any further and if you want to hear women talk, go and talk to Mrs. Sally Phales."

It is not upon record that he went. After he left our community, it came to us authentically

that he had disguised his real sentiments, as our Elder had suspected, and that he was in favor of the ultra woman-movement in State and Church even to the most nauseous extremes. The only safety is in frowning upon the first approaches of this designing heresy.

Severely as the degrading absurdity had been rebuked, I had no idea that it would remain quiet. Agitation is the right arm of every aggressive error. And now under the auspices of the sensation lovers over at the School-House, the thing which had failed in these several attempts, tried to get our attention in more official form. Under the ministrations of Mrs. McManish there was to be a great revival. It was to exceed the late revival at our church by all odds. She had converted twenty-five thousand sinners in the last few years. There was no difficulty in getting up a modern Pentecost wherever she went. When she was preaching, her face shone as the face of an angel. They had had many great preachers, but she was the greatest yet!

Thus heralded, she came and preached. The advertisements did not draw the crowds they expected. This approved instrumentality of modern Gospel-mongers, had lost its holy charm. It is a lamentable thing for posters of star sermons and star pulpiteers when their trick in trade loses its hold upon the tired people and the stars grow pale under the little light which they are able to extract from the Bible. The vexation upon the

faces of the Marstons and Flukes and Jake Askins was so obvious that her faith must have been severely tested in "prophesying" to these forbidding countenances. But it would have taken a worse thing than that to have paralysed her voluble utterance. She preached and she preached lustily. She was independent of magnetism or inspiration.

Mrs. McManish was a stout, muscular being; tall, angular; large hands, large feet, large cheek-bones, large nose and enormous chin; apparently fashioned for one of the masculine despots but by some strange afflictive creative mishap, doomed to be a woman. It would have been unfair to charge her clothes with any defect in neatness of fit or finish, for her figure plainly rebelled against these symbols of subjection as if aspiring to wear something else. Looking upon her, the lovers of the beautiful would have had great latitude for serious thought. By the dispensation of Providence, these women and their sympathizers carry with them the badge of their degradation in the loss of all true womanly loveliness. It grows upon these murderers of the proprieties of life as legibly as God's mark upon the first murderer. Her voice also wore the unfeminine mark, sawing upon the wretched nerves of the tympanum in a sort of spiteful contralto, ragged and fierce and excruciating. Her gesticulation was abundant and threatening and at random. The eye and the tear sat in mute sympathy and wondered what they had done to provoke the woman's ire.

Oh, gentle memories of a departed mother and wife; contented and happy in the simplicity of your lot in the innocent days; living in the quiet dignity of acknowledged worth; honored and revered by husbands and children; undisturbed by any newly discovered rivalry between the sexes; shaping destinies and winning heavenward by your modest piety; the queens of home and the queens of hearts; how far removed ye were in your guileless lives above all these restless iconoclasts of the pure, the lovable and the decorous! how beautiful, how useful, how inspiring! how infinitely more noble while sweetly accepting and adorning the distinctions which the All-Wise Creator has predestined and stamped upon the sexes! Thinking of mother and sisters, and wife and daughters, the old preacher is not in haste to escape from his prejudice against seeing the better sex unsexed and shorn of her chiefest glory. Just as soon as she would compete with bolder-visaged man upon the public rostrum, the higher charms begin to fade and the old preacher's nerves begin to crawl. Spare us our young girls, ye schools and colleges. We do not want the down gone from the peach's cheek. Once gone, it never grows again. The gorgeous stage-dresses, the frills and the curls and the foot-lights, will not compensate for the fading out of the blush of modesty!

And so Mrs. McManish preached. At least her abettors called it preaching. Her fluency was

wonderful. She breathed in numbers, numbers of words, because the numbers came. She was not with us, like Paul, in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. There was no fear of man before her eyes. Like Job's war-horse, she mocked at fear. Like Behemoth, her bones were as strong pieces of brass. Like Leviathan, her heart was as firm as a stone. Her first text was from the eighth Psalm—"What is man that thou art mindful of him." There was far more in the sermon about the claims of woman than the claims of the Almighty. The natural inference would have been that the Babe of the Manger was a female. Her conscience seemed disquieted by her obtrusion into the pulpit and she appeared far more anxious to vindicate her asserted prerogative than the prerogatives of an offended Jehovah. A vast unwomanly self-consciousness glared out from everything she said and did.

Her next text was—"If a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." The aim of this eloquent discourse was to prove that, whatever his pride and presumption, this cruel autocrat of home was but a pompous cipher in comparison with the superior sex over whom he domineered. Before she was done, her uncultured audience had concluded that Abraham, Isaiah, Paul, Knox, and Thornwell were all women —women or nothing!

Her third text was as follows—"The lofty looks of man shall be humbled and the haughtiness of

men shall be bowed down." The gist of her preaching was the same, whatever her text. She doubted seriously whether Eve ever tasted that apple. The writers of the Bible were all of the masculine gender—an exceedingly unfair arrangement—and we need not expect its pages to do full justice to the cause she represented. Every one knew the manifest unfairness and disrespectful partizanship of Paul. Men would be men, in the Bible or out. Here she entered upon an impressive eulogium upon Jezebel—the most admirable character of the two Testaments. The way she ruled her husband and frightened the bold Elijah, was grand and sublime; and the preacher earnestly advocated the queen's canonization as the patron saint of all faithful laborers for the enfranchisement of woman. This sermon was conspicuously marked by severe flings against the Calvinistic faith. Whatever the heresy, it first or last works itself into a frenzy against Calvinism. Though differing widely otherwise, the world's errors unite in antipathy to our immortal doctrines as their common foe. Mrs. McManish laughed at the idea of an overruling Providence fixing the relations of the sexes and deciding the question of precedence. Woman is the arbiter of her own destiny and should recognize no so-called sovereignty but her own. Her will was not only to be free but supreme. With her as with many others, the championed freedom of the human will meant the will's lordship over all other

wills, human and Divine. No arbitrary Scriptural dictum need to be quoted against the rising claims of woman. The church that opposed, would seal its doom. The rigid Calvinistic conservatism was superannuated and must go down before the superior enlightenment of the advanced thought of the day. Some of us understood very well her unctuous diatribes against our dignified Theology. It is an interesting fact that she had first applied for the use of the old Stone Church and had been refused.

Isaiah supplied her last text also—"And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man." In some parts of the country the women were in the majority, and first or last their power would be asserted. She saw the dawn of day. She saw the sceptre passing. The seven would rule the one. Then because of this preponderance of numbers, she foresaw another glorious reform. The present rigid trammels of marriage were to be delightfully modified. The iron chain was to be loosed. Liberty was the watch-word of the century. It was to prevail in the matrimonial world as well as everywhere else. Woman's chances were entirely unequal in the hymeneal market. She had the same right to woo as to be wooed. The world was learning too that there were such things as affinities and repulsions. When incompatibility became burdensome, the poor unfortunate wife should have the privilege of ignoring the iniquitous union and seeking more congenial companionship elsewhere.

"Amen," burst forth in sharp metallic voice from the centre of the impressed congregation. Occasionally it had been heard before during these sermons, and usually in the tones of this same peculiar female voice. With each repetition, a close observer might have noticed deepening lines of displeasure upon the cadaverous countenance of Jeremiah Fluke. Some points in the discourses he admired very much. Such passages as the terrific death-blow to Calvinism, he would reward with a yellow smile. Then the yellow smile would die away and yield to a saffron frown. The latter change would invariably come whenever the preacher by some fierce thrust at cruel husbands would elicit the appreciative responses from the little woman at Jeremiah's elbow. The emphatic amen which we have just made historical, was more than his long-suffering endurance could bear. He arose and interrupted the meeting.

Before listening to his weighty words, an explanation ought to precede. It was an undeniable fact that Jeremiah's home was not a happy one. The saffron frowns prevailed there to the utter discomfiture of the yellow smiles. Growing up in the midst of constant displays of temper between father and mother, it was no wonder that the children were wild and wayward. That long lank form was iron and ice; the little female figure was fire and tow. The holiness leaven entered the household and its united head became sanctified;

but somehow it did not improve their home. Elder Baptow came and immersed them, but the dissension and chronic bickering were not washed out of their lives. That self-same hour she railed on him bitterly because he left his muddy clothes, all dripping from the liquid grave, to stain her new rag-carpet. A male master at home and masculine preachers in public failing to soften and subdue his wife, he had hoped that a preacher of her own sex might influence the little woman for good. He was especially solicitous because among the vulgar company which his religious affiliations had gathered at his house, his partner had shown such leaning to certain disreputable acquaintances as was not at all pleasant to him. It must be told that Jeremiah was jealous and that therefore the saffron had grown deeper than ever before. When the Rev. Mrs. McManish came and threw her contralto voice over to the other side, encouraging the diminutive embodiment of obstinacy and wickedness in her opposition, the poor man was chagrinned beyond measure. And now when the doctrines of free-love began to crop out and when that startling amen was heard at his side, the saffron suddenly blazed into flame and Fluke could forbear no longer.

"I think our meeting had better close," he said, in his most pious drawl. "We are not enjoying it as we had expected. Our women are not receiving wholesome instruction. There is a noticeable tendency around us in directions that

are not right, and this preaching is not of a kind to make it any better. I don't feel that it is to edification. We have not the ear of the community. I guess that the better class of women are not pleased with this sort of thing. There are scolds enough in the bosoms of afflicted families, without promoting these scolds to the pulpit."

There was sensation enough now. The little incarnation of women's rights at his side, had hold of Jeremiah's coat and with visible jerks had been trying to pull him down. Others of the brethren and sisters were indignant that such an instructive discourse should have been interrupted at the most interesting part. Among these was Jake Askins, known to be the worst husband of all, trampling daily upon the poor crushed heart that had trusted him, but publicly the most enthusiastic advocate of the liberation of the sex. On the other hand not a few sympathized with the sanctimonious Jeremiah. Mr. Marston inclined that way, but did not fully commit himself until he could consult his wife.

Meanwhile the Rev. Mrs. McManish turned upon the man of saffron. Like Job's war-horse, the glory of her nostrils was terrible. Like Behemoth, she taketh him with her eyes. Like Leviathan, from her mouth sparks of fire leaped out. She stamped her large feet and commanded silence. She gloried in the opportunity afforded her for showing her contempt for that overbearing sex. She could detect a petty household

tyrant at a glance. No doubt there were women in this house who could tell sad tales of mistreatment if they dared to speak. She would right their wrongs. Her clenched fist was extended toward Jeremiah. He had not taken his seat, and at this point his drawl crept out again over the audience:

"I will speak yet once again. I had not desired to tell it all. For the sake of our cause, I thought that the whole truth need not be uttered. But now I must do my duty. For the protection of our endangered homes, I must brave this pestilent woman and rehearse a tale of woe. Perhaps that unthinking mother in the pulpit will listen to a passage in a newspaper which I chanced to read to-day. For the sake of the cause, I would have preferred to suppress it; but that fist of the preacher leveled at me a moment ago, forces it out. The pulpit as well as the pews will listen attentively. This is the way it reads:

"'A sad tragedy took place in our town on the 23d. It occurred at the house of the McManish family. It is known that the father has become addicted to drink in late years, said to be on account of unfortunate domestic brawls. Mrs. McManish is a preacher of no little note and an able champion of the cause of woman's rights. In the advocacy of these doctrines she spends a great deal of her time away from home. Even before this, there have been severe reflections upon the mother for the neglect of her young

children left so long to the care of an inebriate. She is now absent upon one of these preaching tours and will hear of the accident too late to bring her little ones back to life. On the evening named, a bright little girl about five years of age, and her brother nearly seven, were hovering over the fire-place all alone in the house, when the girl's dress ignited, and the boy in attempting to help her was also involved—both breathing the flames, becoming burned internally and lingering in agony but a few hours. This will be awful news to Mrs. McManish. There are many good ladies here who feel that the mother's duty would have been discharged far better in caring for her unprotected children at home, than in aspiring to the ministerial functions and carrying to strangers the Gospel according to Women's Rights.'"

The saffron frown had conquered. When he commenced reading, her eyes had flashed upon him defiantly; but as he read on and the dreadful truth came out, her rigid features relaxed, her body trembled and her face became pale and bloodless. She staggered from the pulpit and out into the night—to enter no pulpit again, we trust, forevermore.

In her peculiar way at home Mother Howe entertained her busy broom with the following specimen of Natural History—"Which leaveth her eggs in the earth and warmeth them in dust, and forgetteth that the foot may crush them or the wild beast may break them; she is hardened

against her young ones as though they were not hers; her labor is in vain without fear; because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath He imparted to her understanding—Job thirty-nine, fourteenth to seventeenth."

Ah, ye fair homes of my neighborhood, my church and my nation, God guard you from the insidious taint and folly! A travesty of religion, a scandal upon modesty, a scab upon the body politic! While the ingenious infidelity of loose Biblical interpretation is approaching your latitudes in a thousand tentative forms, may we be wise and wary in our generation and give no countenance to this ungodly woman-ranting with all its attendant heathenisms. Send back the invaders by cool neglect. Repel the stealthy influences which would undermine the refined conservatism of our staid social fabric. We love our women too dearly; just as God made them, feminine and refined and mighty in their true sphere; for us to consent that our society should be loosened and poisoned in its very fountain-head and our Christianity be degraded in its fairest ornaments.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

WILLY'S CALL.

Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.—*The Young Samuel.*

SOME weeks back of the last dates of my narrative, and soon after his conversion, Willy Arton began to keep a journal. This he continued to do, regularly or irregularly, for a number of years. It falls in with my present purpose to give the reader a glance at some of its earlier pages.

December 1st. It all seems so strange! I can hardly believe I am a Christian. After thinking about it ever since I was a child, having my conscience continually disturbed, being often moved at heart and then putting it off, and putting it off, it appears like a dream that it should now be all settled and the bad boy forgiven. But then again I think of the love of Jesus and it becomes gloriously real, and I drop my doubts and just go on believing and trusting; and I know it is no dream!

Dec. 2. I want to do something for Jesus. Not that it would save me. Jesus has already saved

me—done it all Himself. But I want to please Him somehow and honor Him. I have to-day read in the Bible—Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

Dec. 4. I wish I were as good as Rose. She is just one of the sweetest sisters in the world. When leaving me an orphan, it was a great mercy in God to give me such a darling sister. Had it not been for her, I don't know what would have become of me. She could always calm and sway me and make me ashamed of sin, when nobody else could. She is doing something pleasant for the Master every day; and I am doing nothing. I wonder if others think Rose as pretty as I do. I don't know how anybody can help loving her.

Dec. 10. I am determined by God's grace to live down that Jake Askins trouble. It scares me to remember how murder was in this horrid heart of mine. Had not God ruled otherwise, the blood of that man would have been on these hands. I wonder, oh I wonder, that God ever pardoned me! Tom Gaines was no worse than I tried to be. But Jesus saved us both. I wish that Askins would become a real Christian. Jesus tells us to love our enemies, and I am trying my best.

Dec. 12. Mr. Weston ought to be very happy. To see so many ascribing their salvation to his influence, must be the richest pleasure in the world. It used to seem a grand thing to be a Napoleon Bonaparte, but I believe it far nobler to lead dying

souls to Christ. How all these new converts love our pastor! I know no treasure I had rather own than to hear even one soul saying that it had been saved through my efforts. It would be delightful to live wholly for Christ and to do good. I almost envied old Job when reading where he says—The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me.

Dec. 13. I am not going to fret any more about my parentage. Nobody can persuade me that Rose ever came of any but pure blood and Christian blood. Nobility is not in birth but worth. There—that is rhyme and sense, too. God has proved Himself the friend of the two orphans, and I believe He'll use us both for some good yet.

Dec. 16. Sunday. It seems to me that I have been more blessed in prayer to-day than ever before. The Throne was very close. I know that Jesus heard. Oh how I wish I could live that way all the time! It seems to me that Rose lives that way. It made me feel more than ever as if I wanted to live a life of usefulness.

Dec. 17. What fickleness! This has been a very unsatisfactory day. My thoughts have been wrong. My feelings have been wrong. I have been restless and peevish and unamiable. It must be easier for girls to be Christians than for boys.

Dec. 18. Our dear old pastor must be a very happy man. At his time of life, it must be delightful to look back over so many years of labor in the vineyard and recall the good he has done.

Everybody honors and reveres him. The old folks listen to his words as to a voice from the skies. And the young people treasure up every smile as a sacred possession. The children know no brighter holiday than to get over to the parsonage. All this must be dearer to him than if he were President or King or Emperor. I cannot imagine a more enviable old age.

Dec. 19. There are a good many young men in our church. They ought to be a great power for good. What are they all going to do? I suppose the Savior is interested in that question. Do they all long to do something noble in His kingdom? Would they be willing to give up every worldly project for His sake? I wonder if any of them are thinking about being preachers?

Dec. 20. The Bible is a glorious book. I wish I knew as much about it as Mother Howe. It must be a pleasant thing for Mr. Weston to study it all the time. Every time I look in it, I find something which appears as if God was speaking it right to me. While reading to-day, I came across a passage which sounded awfully personal. It was about—but no, I will not write it here.

Dec. 21. I saw Mr. Weston looking very strangely at Rose this morning. I don't believe he likes her as well as he used to: He has become very dear to me, but I could not like anybody that didn't like Rose. If he begins to talk freely and unreservedly to her, he seems immediately to check himself and grow absent-minded. She says it is

because he has so many things to think about. But our old preacher don't do that way.

Dec. 22. I wonder what I am to do through life; what trade? what profession? Uncle Allen is ready to fit me for anything I wish and give me every advantage. If I am a Christian, I ought not to make choice of any vocation without first considering whether I can best serve God in it. It is time for me to be deciding on something, for I shall wake up some of these mornings and find myself a man. The question has been bothering me a good while. Pity but somebody could decide for me.

Dec. 23. Another unsatisfactory day. And this the holy Sabbath, too. I envied Mr. Weston because he seemed so earnest and elevated and devout up there in the pulpit. I was doing nothing for Christ, and I feel as if I had no aspirations to do anything for Him. Poor cold soul, I suppose I would let poverty, hardship, self, come squarely between and drive me from duty even though I heard the lips of Jesus saying—Follow me. My prayers froze up.

Dec. 24. Rose is a little peculiar. I love to hear her talk, but sometimes she puzzles me. She has a remarkable knack at reading a fellow without letting anybody read her. She seems occasionally as old as the hills. To-day she said—"Ah, how I wish I was a man that I might go and preach the Gospel to every creature." Now, she didn't want to be a man any such thing? What did she mean?

Dec. 25. Every body is merry. We have had company, and they talked about Jesus nearly all day. I used to think Christianity gloomy. I see now that Christians can be more cheerful than anybody. Uncle Allen and Aunt Lydia say it is one of the happiest Christmases they ever spent. I know why—the whole family united in one immortal hope! They have reason to be proud of our precious Rosebud. She is just as good as she can be. They gave us an elegant Bible apiece; and what pleased us very much, marked in scores of delightful passages. They marked some very strange ones in mine. In Ezekiel I found this—Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel. In each of the Evangelists the selecting of the disciples was underscored. I had never noticed anything especially interesting in that. In Timothy there was a deep line around this—If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

Dec. 26. I've been to the prison to see Tom Gaines. Religion does great things for a man. He talks about Jesus and Catherine all the time. How sweet to have her name associated in his gratitude with the Name that is above every name! A life spent in doing good is the best of all.

Dec. 27. I believe I'll be a farmer—an educated Christian farmer. It is so independent, quiet, respectable. Uncle Allen is a model. He seems to live in contact with the Ruler of the seasons all the time. He cultivates the soil of his heart as

carefully as the soil of his farm. The flocks and the very grass appear to feel his goodness. It is beautiful. Prayer has become as natural to him as singing to the birds.

Dec. 28. The ordination of Mr. Weston has borne upon my mind a great deal of late. It was the first I ever saw, and certainly very solemn. It looked sublime to see a man of his ability surrendering all other ambitions and consecrating all his powers to the service of his Redeemer. I never admired any man so much in my life. I could hardly sleep. I wonder if he had heard the voice of God unmistakably calling him to do that. How did he know he was doing right? Was it by some direct revelation? It was very strange how our old pastor kept watching me all that day. I wonder what it meant?

Dec. 29. I believe I will be a lawyer. It seems to me that a Christian lawyer could do almost as much good as anybody. People say that they all lie; but I guess they could manage to get along without it.

Dec. 30. The last Sabbath of the year. What a year it has been! The year when Rose and I were new-born. That is the brightest thought of all. This morning Mr. Weston preached from the text—Occupy till I come. The sermon was about devoting all our gifts and endowments to the Master. He stirred me through and through. It must be glorious to work constantly for Christ. I wonder what Jesus would have me do?

Dec. 31. A rousing report is flying about. I can hardly believe it. Every body seems pleased. I guess I'm pleased too. Mr. Weston and Catherine will make a splendid couple. I never thought of either of them marrying. I should think that preachers had too much to think about to be falling in love and courting and all that. Mr. Weston will look funny with a wife. Rose laughs at me and says it is the very thing. It seems to me that if I were a preacher, I'd be ashamed.

Jan. 1. All the Valey children who are big enough, are starting to school—rigged out nicely, books, good clothes, and everything. I'm so glad. This is Mr. Sheldon's doing. What a gratification it must be to him as well as to them? I believe I will go into some lucrative business and get rich; then it will be so nice to use my money for the Lord and have all the poor children loving me.

Jan. 3. I believe I will be a doctor. A Christian doctor can do a great deal of good. By sick beds and dying beds, and with families in their many troubles—the family all drawn to him and liking him—he has the very best chances for talking for his Savior. And it would be such a pleasure to cure the suffering as the Great Physician used to do. It would not be much pleasure to make a slip and kill somebody. I expect some doctors dread graveyards.

Jan. 5. Saw Mr. Weston and Catherine riding together. I don't know how they are able so soon to take it as a sort of matter of course. Rose

says it is very romantic and that she loves them both better than ever. I don't see anything very romantic about it. If I were a preacher—but what is the use of my talking abont being a preacher.

Jan. 6. Our two ministers sat side by side in the pulpit. The old paster seems as proud of Mr. Weston as if he were his own son. His good face shone while the young man preached. I found myself envying both.

Jan. 7. At school. I like the Professor better every day. He is so different. He talked to-day about the laws of nature being only God's laws and quoted from the Psalms—The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork. The whole school seemed pleased to hear it. His science got us all half-cracked once. I believe I'll be a Christian teacher. It would be a great thing to train up young people religiously—and especially to train up all the boys for preachers.

Jan. 9. I feel sad. I don't know what my Savior can think of me. In all my studies, actions, words, plans for the future, it is evident that I care more about the opinions of men than my duty to God. This is wicked.

Jan. 10. It just beats everything! Soon after starting home from school, I met Uncle Johnny Phales. He stopped his horse and looked straight in my eyes and said—"Did you ever, William, think about becoming a herald of the Cross?" I said "No," and hurried on. It worried me. In

passing by the parsonage gate a few minutes afterward, I met dear old Mother Howe. She shook my hand very affectionately and said—"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever—Daniel twelve and third." It was the same verse I read on the 20th of last month which seemed so personal, and which I would not write down. It tore me all to pieces.

Jan. 11. I told Uncle Johnny an out-and-out falsehood. He took me by surprise. I was dodging people's hints and, just like him, he put it in such shape there could be no dodging. I am distressed about my answer. For, my dumb journal, I had as well own to you that this matter has been upon my mind more or less ever since I embraced the Savior. I shrunk from owning it either to you or to myself. Now I can speak more freely. I wonder if God sent Uncle Johnny and Mother Howe to me yesterday.

Jan. 13. What presumption for me ever to have thought of preaching the Gospel! This Sunday has made me feel my unworthiness as never before. Mr. Weston and the old pastor seem so holy in comparison. How dare I think of the pulpit! Poor, sinful, weak, polluted soul! No—let me never think of it again.

Jan. 14. I hoped I might never think of it again. It obtruded the first thing this morning. I know I have not a single qualification. My mind is not

strong enough. Preachers ought to be very smart. I can learn, but it takes too much labor. I would not want to be a minister unless I could be something above the ordinary.

Jan. 15. That subject haunts me. But I know that my disposition does not suit the sacred profession. I am too impulsive, too self-willed, too quick-tempered, too proud and stiff. A minister ought to be just the opposite of all this. I am sure that it would not do at all.

Jan. 16. There is no use in considering it: I am no speaker—one of the poorest in the school. I have in my speech a kind of hesitation which seems to have been born in me. Voice peculiar too, harsh and unmusical. A preacher ought to be fluent and eloquent.

Jan. 17. I could never bear the self-sacrifice of the clerical life. It is to be poor and nothing but poor. Paul says it is to endure hardness. It is to suffer whatever anybody pleases to put upon one. This does not suit me at all. There has always been an attraction for me in ease and quiet and dignified leisure. I would soon wear out in anything else.

Jan. 18. An unhappy day. I can hardly look up toward the heavens. It seems all dark. Where has my peace gone!

Jan. 19. Perhaps I would never have thought of the ministry, had it not been for the officiousness of others. I don't think they ought to have done it. It frets me. Perhaps if they had kept silent,

I would never have had any of this trouble. I wish people would mind their own business. That is the way I feel, and still I know it is a very unamiable remark.

Jan. 20. Sabbath again, but these days are not as sweet as they used to be. I scarcely know what the preaching was about. Something about the avoidance of duty and man's excuses to God. I did not enjoy it, and I would not listen. I believe Mr. Weston was preaching at me, and it was not kind. I could not pray. A pretty specimen I would be for a minister.

Jan. 21. It was great injustice to Mr. Weston and God's faithful servants, to speak of them as I did yesterday and the day previous. It was God's best children that did it. Who knows but God himself was speaking through them. The Savior's startling words may apply in this very case— "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Jan. 22. Saw Tom Gaines to-day — pardoned out of prison, and going about a freeman. He can hardly understand it. He feels as if he were alive from the dead. Life came to him as a gift. Came to him without his doing anything to secure it. That looks like my own case. Nevertheless, I have somehow managed to get into prison again. My soul is not going about free, as it used to do.

Jan. 23. Wednesday. The brightest day for a good while—one to be remembered. What a blessing to have a faithful Savior! I have enjoyed

praying real well. The grace of God appeared to envelope me and bring me right up to the throne. The marvelous thing about it is—whenever I pray most and the nearer I get to Christ, the more pleasing becomes the thought of being a preacher and the less difficulty there is in the way. The colder I get, the more I shrink from it. This is suggestive.

Jan. 24. What inconsistent beings we are! Yesterday as joyous as I could be, and to-day the sunshine all gone! I ought not to be in the church. Nobody as changeable and contrary and full of moods as I am, should claim to be a Christian. There is no sense in it and no religion in it. I am going to burn this Journal and destroy all this record of sinful caprice. I wish it were as easy to blot out my record on high.

Jan. 25. This is horrible. Dark, dark, nothing but dark. I don't know what to do. I never have been born again: I have never been a Christian. I am nothing but a hypocrite. Satan deceived me. I took that to be religion which was not religion.

Jan. 26. Sunday, and what a Sunday! I would not go to church. The very sunlight was a terrible rebuke. I could not bear the sight of our old preacher. To have gone through the forms of worship would have maddened me. I pretended I was not well and stayed at home; and so again perpetrated a lie. To make it worse, on opening the frowning Bible, I happened to get hold of the

fiftieth Psalm—But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare My statutes or that thou shouldst take My covenant in thy mouth; Seeing that thou hatest instruction and casteth My words behind thee; Thou givest thy mouth to evil and thy tongue frameth deceit; Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother. And so, all the way through these verses, it seemed that every word was directed against me. God was reading me to the quick. It included me among the wicked who would presume to preach

Jan. 27. I am glad the Sabbath is gone. I dreaded it and well I might. If this is to be the way, I wish I was where there were no Sabbaths. What a thought? I wonder what the unpardonable sin is. I believe I have committed it. This is awful.

Jan. 28. A gloomy night and a day just as gloomy. I started to the Bible. I turned away from it. I dreaded it. It seemed to have nothing for me within its pages but condemnation. Its promises are veiled. Its curses are all hurled at my head.

Jan. 29. *I will not* be a preacher.' I had rather die. The fact is, I wish I were already dead.

Jan. 30. These are deep waters. My soul gasps upon the brink of woe. I can not study. I can not eat. Rose notices my despair and is in tears. She tries to share my anguish but can not reach it. Uncle Allen and Aunt Lydia see there is trouble, but neither can they reach it. I am

driven all alone before Almighty wrath. My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me.

Jan. 31. I WILL NOT preach: There are a thousand reasons why I should not. One is enough—I am not a Chsistian. I am lost!

February 1. Save me, O God, from all this. Save me from my own will. Save me from these tortures of remorse. Save me from hell. Save me from myself. Oh crush me or help me. Look through these clouds, O Lord. Give me one promise. Hold me up or I sink eternally. Pity me. Give me one ray of light.

But no light came.

Feb. 2. This has been a Sabbath of marvels. It began along the verge of perdition. It is closing on the suburbs of glory. I had struggled and agonized in prayer nearly all day. I was almost crazed. I started in distraction from my room to go over and see Mother Howe. Perhaps her Scripture would help me. I must find deliverance. I would die unless helped. On the way it suddenly occurred to me that One mightier than Mother Howe was my sure Helper; that He was nearer to the breaking heart than she or any other mortal—a present help in every time of trouble. He was with me—He was pitying me—He was forgiving me—He was loving me. Then the light came: I knew that He was my own faithful Jesus. What had been the matter with me? Why had I ever doubted? Had I been demented? It was all so simple and so clear. I had learned it before,

but I had to learn it again. Precious Savior: He had never forgotten me. Had just kept on loving me all the while. Only I would not see it. I see it now. And the clouds went. And this was faith!

I have not told all. The moment the thought of my Savior grew sweeter to me than all else beside, the thought of the Gospel ministry also grew sweet. To work for Him all the time, to win souls to Him all the time, to have nothing to do but serve Him—it would indeed be the highest and happiest and most exalted calling of all. The other professions would leave but a part for Christ; this gave the whole. I saw that God had been wooing me that way for a long time; only I had refused to yield. I need have no fears. His grace would supply my defects, tone down my evil dispositions, overcome all barriers, and be *itself* my qualification. God's people, at whom I fretted, had seen it. My pretty partial Rosebud had been certain it would come and was now singing like a canary all over the house. Aunt Lydia kissed me and Uncle Allen kissed Rose, and their lips were as soft and fragrant as if God's own fingers had touched them with the balms of answered prayer. May they live to hear me preach, and then and always may my sufficiency be where Paul's was!

CHAPTER XXXIX.

UNDER THE FIFTH RIB.

And Joab said to Amasa, Art thou in health my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him.
—*2 Sam. xx: 9, 10.*

THE church was enjoying the fruits of the revival. Congregations were larger than ever in the history of the organization before; many attending who were not in the habit of being seen at public worship anywhere. The prayer-meetings had grown in numbers and in fervor. Contributions to all the various charities of the Church at large had considerably increased, for Mr. Weston had diligently used this season of the manifest presence of God's Spirit to evoke the interest of the people in the beneficent agencies of the Presbytery and Synod and General Assembly. The circulation of our Church-paper was more than doubled. Many volumes of sound Calvinistic literature were put in circulation. A congregational library was established, composed of the works of our best denominational writers; historical, doctrinal and of the pure religious

belles lettres; to be increased from time to time and remain open to all our families. Zion had certainly lengthened her cords and strengthened her stakes; and we used the divine opportunity to press on toward the ideal of an intelligent, sound, cultured Presbyterianism.

These evidences of our prosperity were recognized by the whole country around. To those that have, it shall be given. A revived, working church will always prove attractive and will gain the favor of beholders. In the spirit of enterprise there is magnetism. Was the time at hand when our temple must be enlarged? Life, joy and expectancy were coming into flower and fruitage all about us. The ways of Zion are very beautiful when faith stands erect and eagle-eyed at her altars and looks confidently through every blazing promise up to the Promiser.

It was cheering to see men changed—absolutely changed; transformation wrought in purposes, motives, principles, conduct and aims in life. The community saw it—felt it. Among the many thus changed, none were watched with so much interest as Tom Gaines. Of course there were those who prophesied his fall; and there were those who believed in the power of God thoroughly to renew his nature and enable him to walk the earth in the strength and beauty of saving grace. He missed no sermon; was absent from no prayer-meeting; had entered the Bible class and was visibly charmed with the lessons learned. His

naturally strong mind grasped and appropriated the truth rapidly. An intellect so long uncultured could never have acquired so easily but for the enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit. All the better faculties of the soul, dormant for years, were aroused and re-invigorated by the power of Him that made them. Everybody was marveling at this trophy of electing love, this new creation in Christ Jesus. Old things had passed away; behold, all things had become new.

The School House fraternity alone mocked at the conversion. They had been very zealous in trying to sow distrust of this outlaw and murderer, as they would have had him regarded still. There was a deeper reason for this than appeared on the surface. Gaines was possessed of certain secrets; against these they desired to prejudice the neighborhood. These secrets were already in the hands of the Session. They necessarily came out in the trial of Jake Askins—a trial brought by him to a sudden conclusion. For, as soon as he found that Weston and Lardner had fully unraveled his wickedness, knowing, among other things, of his plot against the twins, he had abruptly defied the Session and avowed himself identified with the School House set. Weston knew him to be one of the men following Rose on that night, when, fortunately, he was himself her protector. The disguised hand-writing of the note sent anonymously to Rose and Willy to drive them from the community, was also recognized as his. The

young pastor could testify further that Askins was the leader at the time when the attempt was made to carry off the orphan girl. Gaines explained that whole plot as the reader already understands it. For some reason, Askins was more troubled by the exposure of his efforts to injure the twins than by charges of positive immorality. Gaines testified to the plan for ruining Mr. Weston during the meeting of Presbytery, showing that it was a joint conspiracy between Askins and Marston and Fluke; that they endeavered to secure Gaines himself as their messenger to the town where the libel was to be printed; and that all this would be substantiated by the testimony of the man who put in type the slanderous forgery. Many direct falsehoods were ready to be proved against Askins. He then pretended to treat our authority with contempt and disowned our jurisdiction. Nothing remained but to excommunicate the man from our communion.

The church had solemnly determined upon a more faithful exercise of the divine ordinance of discipline. No church can be healthy and efficient without it. The dead and decaying and offensive branches must be pruned from God's vine, or we may despair of wholesome clusters. All of these disciplined ones, going out from us because they were not of us, went over immediately to the School House and were received with open arms by the superlatively righteous. The latter were even in haste to secure them, flattering

them, courting them while under process of trial, and calling special meetings of their society in order to hurry them in. This did not help to gain these sectaries the confidence of the community. No church can be respected or long retain its moral power, which shows indecent zeal in offering premiums for those in bad repute in another connection. Churches have characters to maintain or lose as well as individuals. And they are maintained or lost on the same principles.

The School House set after awhile awoke to two facts; that our cause was prosperous and respected; and that their ability to injure us had been over-estimated. Dignified, unpurturbed, our old Calvinistic church had gone on quietly with its own work, had not been shaken from its Christion propriety, had not fallen from grace! Heresy had spent its force and begun to show symptoms of weakness. In the midst of an evident purpose to undermine and demoralize, God's unadulterated truth had survived and been winning great victories for the Master. These men were disappointed and smarting under the consciousness, that with all their varied methods of attack, they had made no impression upon our Scriptural bulwarks. The people saw that these strategists were ready to adopt any expedient, or have recourse to any error, by which they could assault orthodoxy. As with false doctrine in all ages, this virulent spite against orthodoxy was shown to be the actuating motive of all their schemes. Any specious

argument or any painted ism in the world, by which they might combat or sap the life and power of orthodoxy! Orthodoxy was the raw-head-and-bloody-bones of their heretical dreams. Observers saw that their zeal was not so much for any positive system of truth as an antagonism to others. When this was fully demonstrated, their temporary prestige was gone. And when that was gone, everything was gone.

It finally came to this: Those who had exhausted every device to destroy us, now changed their tactics and talked of fraternal relations.

In conversations, in sermons, in papers scattered among us, it became a deplorable thing for brethren not to dwell together in unity. Ecclesiastical warfare was a great wrong. Its influence upon the world was lamentable. We were fellow-Christians and we ought to exhibit to all the earth the spirit of brotherhood. There were only a few differences between us, and these altogether unimportant. Controversy and denominationalism had never done any good. It would be a great damage to the country if their church and ours should continue in opposition. Uniting our forces, we could do marvelous things in the kingdom. Two such mighty churches ought not to stand before the world in the attitude of belligerency. The barbarous religious hatchet ought to be buried. The millennial olive-branch ought to bud and bloom and wave and produce oil!

When, to their mind, the public had been prepared for a more imposing demonstration, an authoritative deputation came over to meet our Session at the parsonage. It need not be disguised that we were too much absorbed in our labors for the Master for us to feel satisfied with being disturbed by any unnecessary diversion of this sort. Our preference would have been to keep the popular thought squarely to the saving truths of the Gospel, rather than to have the attention distracted by any attempted diplomacy between the churches. But here was a chance for another sensation. If we turned them away without a hearing, a coveted opportunity would be afforded for putting us at a disadvantage before the eyes of the community by making it appear that we were uncharitable, intolerant and actuated by some naughty old animosity. I think there was also the latent hope that a difference of opinion might be developed among our own people on these questions of amity, and thus a gain for themselves might accrue out of the broken unity in our own ranks. We humored them, but we knew all the time that these conferences would be productive of no good, and that we were used to give dignity to a trifle.

The delegation was not of a kind to inspire confidence. Not one of these had even the confidence of all that sent them. One represented one form of School House Theology and one another. They had thought it necessary to em-

body the greater and less extremes. The Committee was, therefore, as heterogeneous as the medley of constituents behind them. In the nature of things, it was impossible for us to know with what manner of sentiment we were conferring. Of course the delegation was led by Jeremiah Fluke, the incarnation of superior holiness, the enemy of churches, the advocate of ritualistic materialism, the troubled abettor and victim of woman's rights, and the ready champion of whatever antagonizes with the sacred and settled beliefs of the past.

Jeremiah made the stereotyped speech for love and amalgamation. Their affections were very warm and effervescent and gushing. Aforesaid affections could not be longer restrained. Their arms were wide open for our embrace. Their bosoms were bared for our repose. Come back and let us live in peace and unified felicity.

"You say to us, Come back," said old John Phales. "We have never gone anywhere. We have staid where we were. We have nothing to go back to."

Jeremiah did not seem to see the point. He and his people were very fond of us. They felt the ties of kindredship. They loved us exceedingly. Whatever our faults in the past, they were willing to meet us cordially as if these things had never been. There was no resentment in their bosoms. They would bring no charges. They threw the pall of charity over all defects. They

would treat us just as if we had never offended them. They were ready to forgive everything.

"What offence?" said Lardner. "Pall of charity over what? Will you designate the grievance which you are kind enough to forgive?"

Jeremiah could not see the point. He thought the Stone Church and the School House were presenting a sad aspect to the nations. He mourned that two such ecclesiastical bodies, of such extensive influence, of such wide repute, should be found arrayed against each other in bellicose words and deeds. It was not after the spirit of the Gospel of peace. Let us shake hands with each other and make it all up.

"Make what up?" answered Phales. "Have we done you any harm? Have we interfered with your work? Do you wear any stabs or bruises from our weapons? If so, lay them bare and we will try to atone."

Jeremiah did not see the point. It was a solemn attitude to occupy before the world. There had been severe things spoken. There had been harsh words said.

"Who said them?" queried Lardner.

"If we have uttered anything offensive to you or your friends, we are sorry for it," said the amiable voice of Allen Anson. "It would grieve us to know that we had traduced the good name or hurt the feelings of any of God's children. We certainly will not feel any hesitation in avow-

ing our regrets. We shall be glad to retract any slander and make every proper apology."

Jeremiah did not appear to see the point. He had come in the interest of truth and righteousness; he would be so glad to go back and report that the delegation had been met in the same spirit. It would do great good in the community to see an interchange of civilities between the two societies. Platform congratulations were a mighty evangelical power. Whether they dealt in witticisms or brag or flattery, they were a prodigious means of grace. He was convinced, too, that the neighborhood would be delighted to witness such a neighborly understanding between us as would secure an introduction of his preachers to our congregations and a hearing for his principles in our pulpit.

I think that the chairman of the Committee was telling too much. There was an appearance of uneasiness among the delegates. Perhaps it was bad policy to let it be suspected that back of all this parade of good feeling, was the purpose to secure, by indirection, an apparent indorsement of their heresies to our people, under the cover of fraternity.

"But," said the matter-of-fact John Phales, "what principles do you expect us in this way to befriend? How shall we know what sort of preachers we shall be called upon to vouch for? Is it such as your first two missionaries, with one of them afterwards utterly disgraced? Is it the

conspirator Plym, with a secret dagger up his sleeve? Is it your Mrs. McManish, with her paraded antipathy to the writer of one-third of the New Testament? Or is it Jeremiah Fluke? Not even two of this Committee agree. Those that sent you do not agree. Unless we know your principles, how can we know with whom we are conferring, or with whom we are expected to exchange Christian salutations?"

"You speak of hard words," said Lardner. "Do you remember your own bitter speeches, Jeremiah, in which, within twelve months, you publicly branded us as destitute of the spirit of Christianity, and in which you proclaimed yourselves too holy to hold fellowship with us? We never retorted. We left you to the undisturbed enjoyment of your asserted superiority. Then, do you remember the slander against our preacher, fabricated and printed and thrown into our Presbytery? His character, as dear to us as our own, you deliberately attempted to blacken. Then, do you remember those resolutions at the School House, formally adopted and promulgated, in which you solemnly enacted, in the cause of righteousness and in the fear of God, that we were all schismatics, heretics and blasphemers? I have a copy and am quoting your own words. Now, we care nothing about these things. We bear no enmity. But when you speak of harsh words, it is well for it to be known who spoke them."

Jeremiah would not see the point. We ought not to rake up these old sores out of the dust of centuries. That was the rhetorical way of describing what had occurred within a few months. He thought the past should be allowed to bury the past. Let by-gones be by-gones.

"Honestly and without dodging," said the plain, unsophisticated John Phales, "are you sorry that you slandered our pastor, and that in formal resolutions you denounced us all and placed us under the ban of your heaviest condemnation? If so, have they ever been repealed? If not, will you repeal them?"

Jeremiah seemed to see the point but was sorry that the point had been raised. To resurrect these old troubles would not be to edification. If comity was desired, it would be wiser to confine ourselves rigidly to the present and yield ourselves passively to the great floods of love and unity now rolling in irresistible tides all over the known world. The spirit of modern Christianity demanded that we should forget all preliminaries, mount the swelling billows, and go on with the current. Let us ignore old grudges.

"We are not conscious of a single grudge against a mother's son of you," said Phales.

"You must remember that you are seeking us in this conference, not we seeking you," said Lardner. "The offence was all on one side. You disowned us as a part of Christendom. You virtually unchurched us. We did not resent it. We

let you enjoy your deliverances. We never retaliated. Now, when you come talking of friendly relations, the thought is forced forward that in your former words and acts you were either right or wrong. If right, then we are still unworthy of confidence, for we have not repented under your accusations. If wrong, it is the part of honest men to say so. An honest man would say so. With dishonest men we do not know how to confer."

Jeremiah thought they were doing enough simply to recognize us as Christians. This, of itself, was a great concession. For an organization whose claims to more than ordinary holiness were emphatic and notorious, to testify to our Christian character, was an act of conciliatory charity which would bring them great renown. He thought our hearts ought to open at once to their proffered readiness to accord us their official certificate of present good character.

I was astonished at the patience of old John Phales. He was bearing far more than we would have expected. He answered calmly — "But it all amounts to this: You send us forth to the great sisterhood of churches with two certificates. One that we are schismatics, heretics and blasphemers; the other that we are very respectable sort of fellows, whom you condescend to admit into your company. You offer us testimonials of good character and testimonials of bad character. We don't know how to use them both. Candidly, we prefer one or the other. Both came without

our solicitation, and we rather think we have the right of choice."

I believe that the old man and Lardner were amusing themselves at the expense of the delegation. The latter said — "Perhaps you would gladly recall the certificate of bad character. It would be the natural impulse of a bosom now admiring and loving us."

Jeremiah evidently saw the point, but was compelled to say that, in the very nature of the case, it would be impossible. His constituents had passed through several radical transformations since then, losing their identity every time. When co-operating with Darby Plym they were not responsible for what they did under the apostles of holiness; and when co-operating with Elder Baptow they were not responsible for what they did under Darby Plym; and, at the present juncture, they were neither one nor the other. And, furthermore, under Mrs. McManish some of their men had become women and some of their women had become men, and they were now a kind of neuter gender; and it stood to reason that they were not amenable for anything said or done previous to these remarkable metamorphoses. All these various elements were so beautifully mixed up together that all accountability for the past to either God or man had been entirely annihilated.

"But is Jeremiah Fluke annihilated?" questioned the obtuse Phales. "Has Jeremiah Fluke lost his identity?"

Jeremiah could not see the point. All that was done in those days, was simply a part of the history of the neighborhood. The history of the neighborhood was a consideration of transcendent importance. It would not do to tamper with the history of the neighborhood. The history of the neighborhood was a sacred thing, neither to be repealed nor disapproved. They ought not to be asked to humiliate themselves by marring the illustrious annals of heroic days.

"We have no assurance," said Lardner, smiling; "that you will not use your first opportunity to make some more history after awhile."

The Ministers had safely left the conference in the hands of the Elders. We sat by and let the common sense of the people's immediate representatives assert itself. Here, after all, is the sterling conservative element of the Presbyterian Church. It had as well be owned that we preachers are sometimes a little impulsive and visionary and hasty. We admire the wisdom of the Great Head in giving this strong substantial arm to our system of Church government; God's people uttering their voice distinctly in every court, and uttering it, not through the anarchy of a mob, but through the mouths of chosen ones, selected as their wisest and best. With the Ruling Elders of our Church aroused and on the alert, the insidious designs of her foes are detected and recoil from her bulwarks harmless. I almost pitied Jeremiah as he saw all his pretensions unmasked and his

secret purposes penetrated. Our Session maintained their good humor remarkably.

Finally old John Phales delivered the general sentiment in these words; for we were all getting rather tired: "We absolutely fail to see any good in the contemplated formalities. If we love each other, the neighborhood will see it. If we fight each other, the neighborhood will hold the guilty party responsible and not be deceived by an empty parade of salutations. Let us all feel fraternally and act fraternally, and there will be no need of ostentatious protestations. The world is not to be fooled by ecclesiastical etiquette."

Anson was as firm as either of the others but the good man longed for the true spirit of peace to prevail everywhere. Ere we parted, he took us up to the throne of grace, the proper place to settle all difficulties.

"O Father," he prayed, "give us the same mind that was in Christ Jesus, who never did or said or felt a wrong to any human being. Give us the Bible charity which suffereth long and is kind. Bestow upon us the grace to differ amiably and have no wrangling. Enable us to perform our separate missions without clashing. Keep us all so near the Cross that there may be no possible room upon which to fight. Show us how to take hold upon Christ with one hand and our appointed work with the other, so there may be no unemployed hand with which to hit anybody. Heal every Marah fountain until the waters are sweet.

Bring us all to love God more, that we may love our neighbor more. Endue us with Thy Spirit plenteously that we may know how to preach the Gospel positively and live it graciously, without assaulting others and trying to feed the souls of men upon negations and vituperation. Thy kingdom come."

CHAPTER XL.

VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.

The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.—*Psalm xxv: 11.*

YOU saw it upon every face. You noticed it in every group and you caught it in every tone. The whole community owned the solicitude. It seemed to overhang every part of the wintry landscape. The old Stone Church wore a soberer gray. The atmosphere was motionless and pensive and oppressed as if under a spell of dread. Wherever neighbor met neighbor, the question was asked—"How is Catherine May?"

All eyes turned instinctively toward the one dwelling. The house rested there still as death among its leafless trees and was growing sombre with the brooding of twilight. The disease was approaching its crisis. How well we all know what that means! To linger and wait and feel that a few hours must solve the problem of life and death; to hope and fear and tremble upon the revelations of one day; to watch the hands of the clock and count the pulse over and over like precious treasures, and scrutinize every expression

of the dear face; to be driven in upon our own helplessness and know that we are utterly impotent to stay the tide; to stand silent and abashed and in awe in the presence of a Power with whom is the number of our months and who has known the results of this juncture from eternity, and whose sceptre now waves very near and must rule as seemeth Him best; it is an hour that tries the loving soul more than ten years of toil and struggle, and almost breaks the heart before the time of breaking comes. Happy the breathless watcher and the patient sufferer when they can both lean upon their God, meekly, submissively, and say—"Thy will, not ours, be done."

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon thee;" and the mind of the lowly patient was there at peace and stayed. No word of complaint had been heard. From the physician we learned more of what she suffered than from her. Her words were as cheerful as they were months ago among the young people in the woods. At times, we knew the pain was on her, but even then she comforted those who beheld her sufferings. Often were we reminded of Him who paused amid His billows of woe to say to other burdened bosoms—"Let not your heart be troubled."

Not long after Catherine's severe illness began, Tom Gaines asked Mr. May's permission to remain constantly at the house. Never was there a more ready messenger by day or by night.

Nothing could be needed but he was the first to bring it. He quietly took charge of the fire in the sick room and henceforth no more difficulty was known about the regularity of temperature. He was equally as successful in guarding against noise. No one could tell when he secured even an hour of sleep. I believe he attributed her sickness to the poison which entered her system by the grave of his boy and to the exposure during her efforts for securing him a pardon. Perhaps he was not entirely wrong in this.

"Oh that I could die in her place," he said, at one time, while we all thought she slept. She had heard his words. "There is One who has died for us both," she answered. "He has passed through the valley and left only the merest shadow. The path seems very pleasant and luminous because His dear feet passed along the way."

"But, my best of friends, I cannot bear for your poor body to endure what it is enduring. I can't see why God would have it so."

"Hush, Thomas," she replied. "I know you feel for me, but you must not question a tenderer mercy. It is all lovingly right. I cannot afford to lose a single one of these pains. They are essential to what is yet in reserve, and Jesus thinks enough of me to lay them on. He bore our sicknesses before we did, and knows how to grade them to our needs. It is sweet to be drawn closer into His arms in these moments of pain."

Just then one of her severest paroxysms came on, and we seemed to see her, resigned and uncomplaining, nestle nearer and nearer to the bosom of the Man of sorrows. There was not one groan. Not a sigh.

Soon after her dangerous illness became known, our Professor sent to inquire if he might visit her room. Somehow I felt glad when I heard of the request and the permission. He had become a regular attendant at church and was frequently seen in our prayer-meetings. I had been praying with some faith that his influence might be consecrated to God. With all his late follies, the Professor had many good traits of character. His naturally kind disposition had won upon his pupils and would sway them toward whatever opinions he might adopt. There was in him a strong desire for the acquisition of knowledge. Being thereby led into great enthusiasm in the pursuit of science, he had unfortunately trusted his authors implicitly without distinguishing speculation from demonstration. Of late he had begun to be more careful in holding his authorities to the facts. He was surprised to find that much which he had recieved unquestioning was unproved hypothesis; and that after eliminating all this, there was nothing in the remainder which was in conflict with the Christian faith.

"I thank you for letting me come, Catherine. Science fails me here. It speaks no word of comfort to the suffering or of hope to the dying. It

does a little for the body, nothing for the soul. I wanted to see how your assured trust supports in hours like these."

How good and considerate she seemed! I am sure that she pitied him far more than he pitied her.

"I feel your kindness, Professor. God is very kind in giving me such friends. I have been thinking of you and praying for you. I believe you want to be a Christian, and salvation is nearer than you think. Oh that it may come to pass before I go away!"

The moisture grew in his eyes and ran down the Teacher's cheeks. I rejoiced at this. Tears have melted away many a false theory.

Then she talked to him softly about Jesus. The story of the Cross was told very sweetly, as it has often been told upon dying beds. She had frequently to wait and rest her weak voice. The deep stillness was very impressive during these pauses. Then she would commence again and tell of the preciousness of the Christian faith and of the Savior's interest in the sad and lonely. Geology may have constructed the cold rocks and barren soil of Calvary, but not the immortal Hope which grew in blood and bloomed among its sculls. After she was almost worn out, she asked us to kneel and, unexpectedly to every one, she requested Tom Gaines to pray for our friend.

"God Almighty," urged this new voice in prayer, "You know it all. You can pilot him.

You can show him the facts. God Almighty deliver him from that great nonsense. This blind man wants his eyes open. Open them, O Lord; first to see himself lost, and then to see himself saved. Explain the Bible and sin and the cure. Don't let him think of any other poultice or medicine but the gushing blood of Christ. Keep him gazing that way. Pick him up in thy arms and wrap him all up in the promises. Let him drop everything else but Jesus. Amen."

They arose from their knees. Julia Phales was starting home. Catherine asked the Professor to attend her. This wise woman knew that the strong common sense and old-fashioned piety of Julia was just what the benighted visionary needed amid the mists and fogs which enveloped him. Contact with her sound practical faith would be an excellent antidote to his vagrant fancies of speculative unbelief. Our dear girl asked the Professor to confide in Julia and listen to her counsels.

On another day my readers would have been delighted to see our former friend, Nelly Valey, in the sick room. And especially to see her able, by leaning upon Rose, to walk across the floor to the bedside. Unknown to us all, Catherine had for some months been corresponding with the Faculty of a leading medical college with regard to Nelly's case, and, under the prescribed treatment, the invalid had been gradually and surely improving. The grateful girl had insisted upon her first

visit from home being to the room of her benefactress, that Catherine might witness the result of her kindness before she died. Perhaps there was seldom a deeper joy beaming upon Catherine's sweet face than in that hour. The pleased eyes followed every step with increasing gladness. The embrace was lovely in its tenderness. Soon after this, one of Catherine's attacks came on, and Nelly walked alone across the room and brought the medicine. The smile upon the sufferer's face subdued the shadow of pain. To be now waited upon by this life-long invalid was one of the rich rewards with which, even in this world, the Master sometimes compensates His faithful servants for their benefactions to the sorrowing and the needy.

Mary Sheldon was spending the night with Catherine. If the fast-fading one had been herself going to be the bride, she could not have shown more delight in all the little details of joy. She talked with Mary of the parsonage now being built, suggesting the style of furniture and planning the flower plats. Then she pictured the visits from the eager children, their love for the pastor's wife, their willingness to be led to Christ. How little any one could have supposed that these words, all so bright and cheering, were uttered in intense physical pain. Nor did Mary know that her sympathizing friend's joyous girlhood had once talked all these sweet dreams over with my Willie in the years before; and that they had

been folded away with his shroud. It was also true that for Jesus' sake she had endeavored to revive them during the last few months, and that she was now putting them away forever. There were to be wedded hours and a parsonage home for her—no, nevermore.

The Ansons came for an hour or two every day —came like an intimation of the Mercy-seat. A prayerful presence is one of the best sedatives for suffering. It enters the sick-room like a welcome breeze from the purer upper air. To Catherine now, it seemed but a little distance from the society of the praying to the regions of praise. These two people brought the vicinity of heaven with them whenever they came. Wherever pain and sorrow are, there the praying should also be.

Mother Howe with her breathings of Scripture was a visitor no less welcome. Catherine said that my old housekeeper brightened her chamber like an open Bible. "Light is sown for the righteous and gladness for the upright in heart. Psalm ninety-seven and eleventh." In the mind of the old woman, Catherine was already reaping great swaths of light from the harvests which God had sown. "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ—Second Corinthians one and fifth." In the grief and in the joy, temporal and eternal, Mother Howe was recognizing the believer as one with our Savior. Alas for the life which would make

us afraid to allude to death in a sick-room! The old Mother knew there was no danger here. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." All full and overflowing with Scripture, she was herself as the rod and staff of God.

Willy Arton came to see Catherine. "I would almost be willing to stay upon this earth a few years yet," she said, "to hear you preach. But when I go I will find your dear mother and tell her that the orphan expects to be a winner of souls for the honor of her beloved Redeemer."

In the midst of great anguish of body some one said to her—"Are you not impatient for all this to end in the bliss of heaven?" "It is already heaven," she answered, "to know that Jesus is here and enfolding me in His embrace." We felt that we were standing upon holy ground, and that sick-beds may move up very near to the everlasting gates.

At another time a friend inquired—"Have you no shrinking from death?" "No," was her answer, "and I have never in my life known an hour when I was afraid to die. Far away among the dimmest recollections of earliest girlhood, is the sweet memory of love for my Savior. I do not know when I did not love Him. Had I died any hour during all those years I believe He would have taken me to His glory." This wealth of piety and usefulness had grown out of conversion in childhood.

And now the day of the crisis had come; the whole neighborhood knowing it, feeling their powerlessness, and burdened with anxiety. A number of us stood with the family about the bedside, now and then walking silently to other rooms; sometimes strolling out about the yard; then back to the place of our solicitude to gaze anxiously at the one dear face and see what God would do. She had steadily weakened all day. The tide of life seemed surely to be ebbing away. Our hope grew fainter and fainter. And her cheerfulness grew brighter and brighter. She talked to us more ravishingly than ever about Jesus. An ethereal beauty gathered about her pale features. To her we knew it would be great gain, but alas, the loss to us! What would we do without our Catherine? After my children were all gone, I had thought that she might be with me in my last hours and with her soft fingers close my eyes. That which bound me most to the joys of the past, seemed loosening all away. I had no right to hold her back and I was trying to look beyond the parting and say, Amen.

One of her hands was enclosed in Weston's. Little had been said between them; but we all tacitly recognized the relationship existing, and gave place to his silent claims. The bereavement was following very soon upon the betrothal. And he seemed to retire away from us all, far in upon himself and his great sorrow. Two or three times she had asked him to be brave and to look for-

ward to God's future. Her eyes would rest often upon him, and I saw the same look there as when she looked upon her brother. We heard her whisper once, "Do not yield to regret; dear Calvin, it was never to be." And again, after awhile—"God knew that you did not need me. We were both mistaken. He will supply the true help you need."

She was visibly sinking. Amid the stillness, we almost listened for the sound of the wing of the death-angel. A great mystery was hovering about us. Her face was transparent; we seemed to be looking at a white soul rather than a poor emaciated body. She turned to find Rose Arton. Rose interpreted the look as asking for something, and she brought a glass of water and held it to her lips. This was but one of a thousand times, for the young maiden had refused to leave the house after the sickness began. Catherine took one of the sad girl's hands in hers, still holding Weston's in the other. I saw her looking now at Weston, now at Rose. Not only once, but over and over. I could not have told why, but at that strange time I found myself recalling three pictures already described in this story. I saw again the coronation in that leafy alcove when the beautiful orphan placed her wreath upon Weston's brow and Catherine stood smiling by. Then I beheld the scene at the parsonage when with subtle womanly power Rose was soothing her enraged brother, and my colleague looked on

with an expression which I had never seen upon his face before. Then again I saw the impressive scene, when the young minister, elevated, rapt, was placing the baptismal water upon his first convert's brow, standing before him amid her first love and looking as pure as an angel. Unbidden these pictures flashed before my mind as vividly as when they were first beheld. Why came they there at such an hour?

Just then I saw Catherine's eyes certainly closing, and at the same moment I saw her bring the hand of Weston and the hand of Rose together, enclosing them in both of hers and holding them clasped upon her own bosom. The breathing sunk lower and lower. The end was certainly near. We all gathered closely about the bed. There was no struggle. There was now no pain. How glad we were of that! The father, mother, brother were wonderfully sustained. There was gentle weeping, but they were tears of blessed assurance, sorrowing not as those without hope. No one spoke even in a whisper, while the breath shortened and shortened. The clock ticked very loud as if asserting itself against eternity.

The hands of Weston and Rose remained linked together in the hands and upon the breast of the lamented saint. And somehow we all felt that it was right. Once we thought our beloved daughter was gone, when suddenly her eyes unclosed, she looked quickly up, and her

dear familiar voice was distinctly heard saying—"Is that you, Willie?" Again her eyes gently closed of themselves and all was still.

The awe of death was upon us, and for a moment we remained as motionless as the body upon the bed. Then we knelt and the voice of the old preacher led in prayer. In those moments I thought we all felt very near to the realities where the glorified dwell. The name of my son was the last sound upon her lips. She had spoken as if in recognition of his presence. While we plead for sustaining grace in behalf of the weeping, I felt as never before the presence of the great verities of the spiritual world. Were the intelligences of the eternal realms hovering about us? How long we remained kneeling, I know not. Was it ten minutes? Was it twenty? When we ceased and again stood up, I found that Rose and Weston were still seated upon the side of the bed with their hands yet locked in the lifeless embrace of her for whom we wept.

There was now the usual stir around the bed, some about to lead the immediate relatives from the room, some beginning to arrange the furniture with a view to the inexorable preparations which so soon follow death. I walked over to the dear body and, to relieve our little Rose from a situation which would soon grow embarrassing, I took hold of the snowy hands to unclasp and arrange them. They were not yet cold but tightly closed. Suddenly and startlingly Tom Gaines spoke aloud

—"Let them alone, let them alone; she would have it so!" This called back to the bed the attention of those leaving the room; and just at that moment I certainly felt the breast of Catherine move with a long deep inhalation; I saw her eyes quiver a moment and open; and we all heard the familiar tones plainly say—"Where am I? Where is Willie? I thought I was amid other scenes with Jesus and with Willie. How strange it all is!"

I leave the explanation to those better qualified to solve the physiological problems. It was not fainting. It was not ordinary coma. We all took it to be death. My many years of familiarity with the work of the destroyer, enabled me to detect no difference between that mysterious hour and the passing away of a hundred souls from whom I have been called to separate. I only know that we all gave her up for dead and that she came back apparently better and stronger than she had been for many days. Her recovery seemed to begin from that hour. Her loved ones will never be called to resign Catherine more entirely than they did that mysterious day. And I know that her awakening was as great a surprise to her as to any of us. I only relate the facts.

She turned to me. "My dear old pastor, you need to feel no doubt about the safety of your entire family. If you have ever had a single fear, believe me and put it away. They are all, all there."

A moment and she spoke to her mother. "I thought I had left you, darling mother. But I am going to get well and God will help me to be a better daughter than ever before. The home is very glorious which awaits us after awhile."

She was visibly strengthened. The pain was gone and her voice was clear and sweet. How could we forbid her to talk! She still held the young preacher's hand and the young maiden's, clasped in hers. And now she spoke slowly and at intervals to him.

"Yes, Mr. Weston, we were mistaken. God never required such a sacrifice as we were thinking it right to make. He knows there is no true marriage where two hearts do not prompt. My dear friend, ours would have been only a friendly compact for laboring together in partnership in the Master's vineyard. It might have been friendship, but it would not have been marriage."

She rested a moment, still holding the two hands, and again said;

"It was noble in God's minister to think of giving up so much for Christ. I believe He is about to reward you with great happiness for being willing to deny yourself of happiness for His sake."

Once more she rested, continuing to hold the larger and smaller hand.

"You thought I would be a help to you in honoring the Savior. But there can be no true help to a minister from a wife who does not love. More

than any thing else human, he needs this bond as designed of God. It ought to be consecrated love, ought to be self-denying love, ought to be prayerful love; but for his highest good it certainly must be love."

Again she paused. We waited and listened as to a voice from the frontiers of the better land.

"I was doing you a great wrong, Mr. Weston. I had no right to encourage your purely religious hope when I had no love to give. It is now all very plain. I have never loved but one. I shall never love but that one. With that love undivorced, it would be wicked to marry. As a sister I can help you, rest you, and watch over your happiness still."

Her mild sagacious eyes, with softening blue, were resting now upon Weston, now upon Rose. Their hands were still held in contact.

"I see it all now. It seems incredible that we never saw it before. You, too, have loved another. You have not fully awoke to the fact, because duty and usefulness have absorbed you and stifled the cries of your heart. You never could have been happy until its pleadings were heard."

She was looking through his eyes to the depths of his soul. A moment's pause, and then she said;—

"There is another heart, fresh and virgin and fragrant, which has not yet heard its own hushed

whisperings. In maidenly unconsciousness it quietly waits, nor dreams of its own great depths of devotion and faithfulness. Let your own bosom speak in its unrestrained leanings, and that other bosom, youthful and innocent and unoccupied, will awake and respond and give you love for love. Yea, more than you or she can think. It is strange that we never saw the beauty of it before."

I believe that every one in the room felt the same way. I thought I saw a motion of Weston's wrist showing that his right hand was pressing more closely the little right hand which Catherine still held, along with his, clasped in hers upon her heart.

"God gave her soul to your prayers. She became the seal to your ministry and your first great encouragement. She will be your encouragement still through all that is to come. You will be to each other a first love and an inspiration. You will cherish each other for your own sakes and for Jesus' sake. And you will both wonder that Catherine had to come back from Willie's side to reveal to your souls their own great yearnings. The study, the pulpit and the pastorate shall be illumined with the smiles of true marriage. Leaning upon each other and with these two hands still joined in tenderness, the joys of earth shall be more than doubled and its trials be radiant with good."

She spoke like a prophetess from the Holy of Holies; or like one of God's great discoverers who makes some new truth so self-evident and familiar-visaged that all the world half believe that they were the discoverers too. Their souls laid bare to their own gaze, the low deep call of their love no longer unheard, what would these two hearts do in this solemn presence? Unabashed, reverently, in clear manly tone we heard Weston say—"Shall it be so, my little Rose?" And she crept up to him, her hand still in his, her face upon his shoulder, like the timid motherless lamb which Catherine once bore away from all harm, amazed but knowing the touch of love. Side by side my happy boy led her toward his study, the place of meditation and prayer.

As they passed through the door, the words came sweetly from the bed—"Whom therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder!"

CHAPTER XLI.

DETECTED.

Be sure your sin will find you out.—*Numbers xxxii: 23.*

THE proposition for closer relations with us, thereby to secure their own recommendation to our people under cover of ecclesiastical friendship, did not retard a continued tendency to every thing that was novel and antagonistic to venerable beliefs. After an organization begins to pride itself upon its liberalism and its broad license to erratic religious thought, we need not be surprised at any extremes reached by parties among the heterogeneous mass which this crude system brings together. In this boasted liberalism always lurks a vanity which will never be satisfied within moderate bounds. The ambition to get out of beaten tracks and show great independence of sentiment and excel others in feats of unbridled reasoning, will tempt the rash innovators into the wildest interpretations of Scripture and into the most dangerous forms of disguised infidelity. There were those among us wise enough to know that the deliberate condemnation of all well-defined

symbols of belief, is but the first step toward the adoption of any palatable form of error.

The expected outcry of uncharitableness and malevolence followed closely upon our failure to appreciate the demand of the School House set for an ostentatious exchange of civilities. But the neighborhood was not impressed and the strategists saw their influence waning. Of course they could not be quiet. Their Christianity was more concerned about us than about Christ. Another attempt upon our orthdoxy was made through one of the malcontents who yet remained in connection with our church. His name was Judas I. Scarrot. We knew him to be in sympathy with our opposers. All felt that there were other reasons than principle and Christian love to keep his name upon our roll of membership. His true affiliations were elsewhere.

And now Mr. Judas I. Scarrot aspired to great prominence by presenting a petition to the Session for a revision of our Confession of Faith. He would overture us with the distressing fact that it was intolerant and sectarian and antiquated; that it was unfortunate in modes of expression; that it damned infants and a great many that were not infants; and that it was a divider of brethren. With a few sections and chapters left out, he argued that our Church was capable of becoming a great broad church into which we might gather all that were now fighting against us. He said he was at a standpoint to know that with a few of

these superanuated denominational formulas expunged, our friends over at the School House would be perfectly willing to come into union with us and terminate this great and deplorable contest. Thus the cause of Christ might be made to present a mighty unbroken front to the world.

The Session knew that Mr. Judas I. Scarrot was in constant communication with the Marstons and Flukes, and that the latter were the real originators of this new scheme of assault. Perhaps a stab from within might prove more fatal than stabs from without. "No, no," said old John Phales. "We would not surrender one honored line of that noble book for all the Marstons and Flukes and Judases in creation. It has been hated and maligned for two hundred years and can stand it for a few hundred more. Whenever a word is uttered by some restless Presbyterian fidget against our immortal Standards, immediately the whole world of heretics unite their acclamations with the loud plaudits of skeptics and infidels in one tremendous chorus of hallelujah and amen. They know and dread the bulwarks which have beaten back the whole motley crew of free-thinkers, loose religionists and open atheists for centuries. The few whimsical revisionists fume and froth for awhile, representing nobody, influencing nobody, and sink into oblivion. Back of these, lies the great body of the mighty Calvinistic host, sound, solid, compact, undisturbed, devoted to the truth, profound in the faith, and satisfied. No impression is made by the agitators

and they soon slough off. Perhaps the sooner the better!"

Plain words of truth from the candid Phales were as distasteful to Mr. Judas I. Scarrot as plain words of truth in the Confession of Faith. He soon took refuge from our communion and from plain statements of truth, to the more congenial companionship over at the School House. Lingering in our church with the hope of undermining our principles and subserving the cause of our foes, the revived tone of piety within our ranks and the felt presence of the Holy Ghost had made him more restless and more uncomfortable until he went to his own. So under the divine grace, true orthodoxy always retains the power to purge itself and throw off its noxious parasites.

To those who have watched these phenomena in the churches, it will be no surprise to find that Mr. Judas I. Scarrot, after breaking from former wholesome restraints, plunged rapidly into grievous and undisguised error. His affected horror at what he pretended to be the damnation of infants by our Confession, was based upon something deeper than his ostensible concern for the infants. It is not the only case where those who have cared the least for the spiritual good of the children, excluding them from the covenant and making no provision for them in the church, have raised the loudest clamor against the appropriate and consoling expression of "elect infants dying in infancy." Since their salvation cannot possibly be of works

but of pure grace, and since therefore God's sovereign election is the only Scriptural doctrine which can logically save them, this objector's opposition to our Standards certainly did not grow out of any special solicitude for the poor babies. No, it was founded upon a repugnance to the idea of the Almighty's permitting *anybody* to be eternally lost. If God had chosen all our race to life everlasting, the doctrine of election would have suited this caviller very well. For at heart Mr. Judas I. Scarrot was a Universalist; and as soon as he found himself at home among the creedless sectaries, he felt perfectly free to proclaim his advanced position and seek supporters. And they, upon their own showing, had no right to object; for did not they give free license to all to interpret the Bible as wildly as any one pleased? So he became very zealous in asserting that the tree shall not lie as it falls and that the unjust and filthy shall not be unjust and filthy still; but that there is a probation and cleansing somehow beyond death; unrevealed, unpromised, unprovided for in the Scriptures; but nevertheless absolutely certain. Everlasting did not mean everlasting; eternal did not mean eternal. In another dreamy life the wrath of God was going to accomplish for the graceless sinner what the blood of Christ had ignominiously failed to accomplish in this. The covenant which was a myth and a fallacy in this world, would make a clean sweep in the next.

Mr. Judas I. Scarrot soon had a party. So would any other false teacher that might have appeared among them. Those who have no fixed theology, are ready to be the sport of any error that may present itself. Wherever we find these loose churches, they are the convenient hot-beds in which every flying heresy easily takes root and luxuriates. All among them of doubtful piety began to lean to this India-rubber gospel. Mrs. Fluke modified the theory a little and held that the men alone would be damned. Jeremiah differed with her. Mr. Marston was unable to decide until he had consulted his wife. None of those who had been excluded from our church by discipline, hesitated a moment. All the roughs around the neighborhood were delighted with this elastic salvation and became enthusiastic partizans. The gamblers talked patronizingly of a god who was too good to punish anybody forever, and the drunkards drank to his health. Soon for these loomed up a bolder and more popular leader. There was to be no hell at all. God was a god of love, and was too easy and considerate and nice ever to hurt poor unfortunate sinners. Just as soon as they got through with their transgressions here, they would all have a good time in glory. This zealous advocate for the abolition of the bottomless pit, was the eminently religious Jake Askins.

During these days a report began to work its way around the neighborhood that an extensive

forgery had been committed upon some one of our leading citizens. The community had been subjected to many excitements of late, but this promised to prove the grand culmination. The lovers of religious sensation might afford to rest while this model sensation was abroad. The effort over at the School House, however, to eliminate from the Bible the Doctrine of God's vindicatory justice, kept pace with the growing rumors of the forgery and mingled with them and seemed trying to go wherever they went. Among these hints of crime, the people were not in a humor to look favorably upon the overthrow of retribution. The report of this new wickedness grew more rapidly in interest because of its indefiniteness. No one appeared able to tell upon whom or by whom the deed had been perpetrated. All seemed equally in the dark, and to be waiting in suspense.

Only once did an intimation reach me of apparent knowledge. In parting at the church door after prayer meeting with Mr. Weston, he said to me, privately—"There will soon be developments which will astound the neighborhood and cleanse it."

On Lardner's face I noticed at times a quiet look of gratification which I had seldom seen there except at the conversion of his son. The boy was doing well. Among all that had owned the Savior during our meetings, were few more striking changes. He had changed his habits, changed his tastes, changed his associates, and was regular

and prompt in every good work among the young people. What delight the one erring member may occasion in a household by becoming a Christian! This had now settled down into a sober accepted joy—a repose of family happiness. Something new was occurring to cause the exhilarant and triumphant look upon the countenance of the shrewd Elder.

Another singular thing was the presence at the Ansons' of a visitor whom nobody else seemed to know. He was a still, reticent man, who sought no acquaintance and who seemed disinclined to notice anybody or anything around him. I did not understand why Allen had not brought him over to see me; or, at least, why he did not have something to say to me about his guest. Allen had never acted so before. To make the enigma more puzzling, this visitor began frequently to attend the Universalist meetings at the School House and they began to claim him publicly as one of their partisans. I wondered how any near friend of the Ansons could be leaning to such people. Allen and Lydia must be feeling very uncomfortably about it.

Meanwhile the new disciples of this posthumous redemption, sent off for a preacher of the popular dogma; the dogma which was going to save without the new birth, without repentance, without self-denial, without moral character. Mr. Love came and proceeded to advertise a sort of feeble, soft, sentimental deity, whom it would never have

needed the death of a Divine substitute to propitiate, who was so weak as to promulgate a law without sanctions, and who would turn sick and faint at the thought of giving pain to an offender. The preacher's words were silvery and mellifluous, and his voice as soft and soothing as the humming of bees and the quivering of the leaves on a sleepy day in June. It would have been very cruel to have enunciated a harsh doctrine or breathed an unpoetical thought to the innocent sinner as he floated along upon the still waters of unconcern through the green pastures of iniquity on toward the rest which remaineth for the people of God. The unrefined and obsolete figments of native depravity and human inability were pleasantly waived, or only alluded to with a delicate shrug of cultured horror. Sore consciences were made to wonder why they ever permitted themselves to be bothered with evil dreams, and the great Judgment Day began to be transformed into an entertaining pageant where by some post mortem legerdemain the goats were to be suddenly changed into the whitest of sheep.

While he was preaching so softly and euphoniously, that dark rumor was creeping just as softly from ear to ear and from house to house all around the neighborhood.

Calvinism—no, the purring preacher would not distress their nerves nor mar the holy hour by discussing that ghostly nightmare of the gloomy past. It had been very barbarous to break in with such

an unfeeling Theology upon the guileless security of the lovely sinner. To disturb man's chivalrous dependence upon his own merits, was very humiliating and was very righteously resented. Manhood! manhood! manhood! that was the climax and cap-stone of all religion. Let the drear doctrine of election and the grim doctrine of hell, be buried together in the tomb of the world's distempered fantasms. The transgressor need not be discomposed. Notwithstanding all that had been said against it, human nature was a very saintly thing and was tending upward in one great hopeful mass on toward a celestial hodge-podge where the Sodomites and Pharaoh and Belshazzar and Judas had gone to prepare the many mansions for us.

Still the rumor of crime was spreading through the neighborhood.

No, his soft, effeminate, sentimental deity would never hurt the sensibilities of even his most irreconcilable foes. His love had repressed his justice and put it out of the question. The sinner need not be afraid.

The trampling of horses was heard rapidly approaching, and then the sound of voices in the yard.

No; transgressors need not be disconcerted. Theirs was a general amnesty from guilt, whether they would accept it or not. The ten commandments might be broken one by one and ten thousand times over and never repented of, but it

would be all the same. The blood of Jesus might be despised till the last breath; it would make no difference. The scare-crow of punitive justice was a defunct fiction of the dark ages!

"Not exactly," said the officer in front, as twelve men entered the house; a part of them guarding the door and several of them walking up the aisle. "In the name of the State I arrest Jacob Askins, Jeremiah Fluke, Judas I. Scarrot and Robert Marston, for forgery."

There was great confusion. Amid the excitement Askins drew a pistol and rushed toward the door, threatening the guards and endeavoring to force his way through. In a moment the report of a pistol from another hand was heard, and Askins sunk to the floor, howling out profanity as he fell.

Over the noise the voice of the preacher arose —"This is a high-handed outrage. You have interrupted divine worship; you have profaned this holy place; you are shooting down God's saints like dogs. The eternal anathemas of the Almighty descend upon you!"

The preacher was more orthodox in his cursing than in his preaching. How much further he might have gone in such vigorous maledictions we know not; but just then a second officer who had come from a distant county and who had remained standing near the pulpit, now spoke—"Mr. Mark Anthony Love, I arrest you on the charge of bigamy. Here are the proper warrants, if you care

to read them. I arrived just in time to take part in this unpleasant service, and you will prepare to accompany me at once to the presence of your two wives."

Another of those singular coincidences which sometimes occur in God's dealings with men. It was very evident that the minister and his supporters were equally interested in desiring that there should be no hell. Under the Divine arranging, the blow had fallen upon all at the same time. It was the most eloquent sermon delivered in that house for many months.

In connection with Weston and Lardner, an expert detective who was the unknown visitor at Anson's, had been working up the case. The attachment of Allen and Lydia to the twins and the growth of the latter in favor with everybody, had caused Askins to despair of inheriting any of the Anson property through his distant relationship. When his hatred and intrigue against the orphans had manifestly failed of the desired results, he commenced in connection with Fluke, Marston and Scarrot a series of forgeries upon Anson and then upon Sheldon. The disguised writing in the cruel note which had been sent to the twins warning them to leave the neighborhood and which was held by Weston; and also the manuscript containing the foolish slander against my colleague which through Tom Gaines was secured from the printer and was likewise in Weston's hands; both were of great service in tracing the

crime to the leading conspirator. So it is that different sins often help to punish each other. Then another unexpected witness was found against them all. They had been in the habit of meeting and maturing their plans at Fluke's. The little woman of fire and tow, listened, overheard, betrayed. She was avenged for the saffron frowns. Next poor weak Marston turned State's evidence, told the whole story, and there was no hope. Askins was not mortally wounded and was well enough after awhile to do very good work by the side of Fluke, Scarrot and Love in the penitentiary.

The poor broken-hearted Mrs. Askins went back to her mother's—another plaintive warning against one of God's children marrying a child of Belial. Mrs. Fluke absconded with one of her affinities whom Jeremiah hated; a delightful consummation of her idea of woman's rights. The families of the other convicts moved away, and the neighborhood had rest. The apostles of the higher life, the church-destroying Darby Plym, the pugnacious Elder Baptow, the unwomanly and unmotherly Mrs. McManish, the advocates of universal salvation, and all the multitudinous haters of Calvinism, will have to go to the penitentiary hereafter to find appreciative audiences.

CHAPTER XLII.

"ONLY IN THE LORD."

And both Jesus was called, and His disciples, to the marriage.—*John ii: 2.*

NANCY SMITH was troubled. The Professor going to marry Julia Phales, the Bachelorville preacher going to marry Mary Sheldon, Mr. Weston going to marry the Arton child, and nobody going to marry Catherine May! And she the best of them all. What was the matter with the men? It was a shame to treat Catherine so! If everybody was going to slight her in this way, there was no use of the good woman's getting well. She had just as well died!

"No, we will not own that," said sister Hope. "In self-defence, you and I will maintain that the very best often remain unmarried. Especially when some of the best of us could have married, may be, and for some good reason preferred otherwise. Who knows but the deepest and truest sentiment the world ever knew, has bloomed and lived on and on in the bosoms of its old maids; helping to warm their sympathies, purify

their lives, and make them thoughtful and kind to all? It may be one of God's ways of preparing for the marriage supper of the Lamb."

The gentle woman's words had gradually sunken in tones very low and tender, but cheerful still.

"Well, say what you will, it is mighty poor living!" persisted Miss Nancy.

True enough, the Professor had found the needed balance-wheel. The romance of so-called science had met its antidote in a fact. It was a fact more momentous than he had ever discovered before. That unmistakable fact was the sterling sensible daughter of old John Phales. The plain, practical modes of thought of this good, substantial household, would be the best counterpoise to his illusive and erratic turn of mind. Already had the staid, unquestioning faith and sober piety of Julia helped him to discard the remnant of his sceptical dreams; and he was expecting to embrace the first opportunity to appear before the Session and confess his Savior. Julia would never have accepted him if she had not seen him putting off his wild fancies and believing in Jesus. She told him afterwards that she would as soon have married a sky-rocket. I am hopeful of the match. The chapters of poetry and prose will alternate very well. Under the influence of Christianity, I would not be surprised if he should yet make his mark in the fields of scientific research. I believe that Catherine had seen it all along. It was interesting to notice the teacher and his betrothed

together; the theoretical and practical arm in arm. No friend of our race will ever forbid the bans when the scientific mind would wed itself to sound common-sense. As soon as vacation comes they will marry and go on a wedding tour to the National Observatory. Julia expects to use the opportunity thereby afforded for calling at the Bureau of Agriculture and securing certain improved varieties of cabbage seed.

We enjoyed seeing Weston perform his first marriage ceremony. I would have it that he should officiate at the nuptials of his young brother preacher and the bonny Mary. The Sheldon mansion opened for a brilliant reception. The old preacher, entirely in sympathy with his fair readers who have been waiting so long and so patiently for the sound of wedding bells, wishes that the dear creatures could all have been there. In their absence, he would be glad to answer any questions. Was the bridegroom nervous? Very. Did he tremble? Yes. Why do men always do that way? I cannot tell, although the memory of my own tremors are exceedingly vivid. Was the bride pretty? As pretty as a vernal posey. Was she scared? Not the least. Brides seldom are — inexplicable fact. The bewitching woman was ready to laugh at the timid husband the moment the ceremony was over. How was she dressed? There you drive me to despair. The forms and styles and configurations of ladies' wardrobes have taken on such fantastic shapes

and appellations of late, that the old preacher's eye and vocabulary are both unequal to the demands of the age. Suffice it to say that, notwithstanding abundance of money, Mary's own good taste had saved true beauty from being spoiled by the hideous fashions recommended by the milliner; and that, consequently, she was attired simply and neatly and well. Did her new husband seem proud? As proud as a king. Weston performed his part nicely. His congratulations of the young minister were very hearty, and we did not wonder. Rose Arton was there, and we knew he was thinking of her, and, of course, he did well. When the sparkling young wife and the orphan kissed, there was a mischievous whisper from Mary's lips which brought to the cheek of the young girl a blush as rich and as bride-like as her own.

And after awhile the old Gray Church itself began to put on bridal smiles and to await another appointedday with gladness. Rose was not willing to designate any time earlier than the recovery of Catherine. The disease had expended itself and the latter was certainly convalescing. The rebound of the neighborhood from its feeling of dread was exhilarant. The people were in fine humor for matrimonial rejoicing. Under other circumstances, some might have felt that the little maiden was too young for a pastor's wife. Under other circumstances, some might have taken exception to the severing of the former engagement

and the strangeness of the new espousal. And some might have objected because of the unknown parentage of the twins. Our neighborhood was very proud and staked a great deal upon blood. And the old preacher was as bad as any in this regard and knew well that both virtues and vices come down in lines of hereditary descent. But I had studied the children long enough to trust my hereditary theory in the dark; or rather to argue backward from present worth to pious ancestry as from effect to cause. And the sweet acknowledged influence of Catherine was mighty enough to ensure universal favor upon the unexpected mating. So glad were they to receive her back from the gates of death, that she could hardly have suggested anything which they would not approve. And Rose was modest and unassuming and more attractive than ever; and everybody began to love her for Catherine's sake and Weston's sake and her own sake.

Those clouds were gone from the pastor's face — entirely gone. How manly and how happy he looked! Catherine had interpreted to him the cry of his own soul. He saw how this lamb of the flock, in her gentleness and lovableness had won upon the shepherd's heart and come to fill a large place in his life; and how, for duty's sake, he had refused to own it. He saw how her orphanhood and her early troubles and his championship of the young girl had absorbed him more than he knew; and how, for duty's sake, he had

still closed his eyes to the fact of personal interest. He saw, too, how his love of the Savior mingled with his regard for the young inquirer and hallowed and deepened it while she was leaning to Jesus and warming her pastor's prayers; and while she was putting on a new spiritual beauty and unconsciously exposing him to the power of new graces at the time when, because of religious elevation, his heart was in its most impressible frames and when his soul and the young convert's soul were thrilling together in unison under the same breathings from the Throne. Thus her gentle image went on stamping itself upon all that was best within him, while under the fancied call of some higher obligation he had tried to crush it and put the bright vision away. He had never succeeded, and now it was clear that duty had never required the sacrifice. His strength and manliness grew greater under the consciousness of possessing the orphan's love, God-given and ordained in heaven. And his admiration for Catherine grew with his attachment to Rose.

And Rose was puzzled more than all others. Why should the pastor ever have thought of her little self in this way? and how came Catherine to think of it too? He was so good and great, and ought to have a better and wiser wife and one that everybody could look up to. She was so unattractive and humble, with nothing in the world to recommend her, and not his equal in any way. What did he find in her to care for? Then there

were all these people to look at her and see her faults and wonder at his choice; and she would faint under it were it not for Weston's great love and God's promise. She was but a child anyhow and he a great strong man. If she were only like Catherine! True, she loved him now; and it was marvelous to her how her sleeping affections, unsuspected and quiet within her bosom, had all at once awoke and gushed forth at his words of tenderness; and how, under the new revelation, she had almost forgotten she was Rose Arton. But, notwithstanding all this bewilderment, her girlish heart was very happy.

Afterward Rose thought of the sacrifice he was making; the condescension in marrying an unknown waif, the child of unknown parents; and she begged him to wait until it could be ascertained whether her birth was worthy of him. But he smiled her anxieties away and said he was glad of the opportunity to show that he valued her for her own sake and for nothing else and no other. And she loved him better still, and wondered only the more. In gratitude, she could not find it in her heart to put him off any longer, except only for the recovery of dear Catherine.

And Catherine May encouraged the timid girlish heart and entered into all her little fears and simple joys; telling her that God was wisely shaping the orphan's life and would make her useful and worthy; that Mr. Weston was almost idolizing her already; that all the people were

waiting to love her too; that the same sympathizing Guest who was at the marriage in Cana would be at hers and would supply the sweet wine of trust and gladness. She told her about her own girlhood's love, and that it was the brightest of earthly things, and that it had never faded, but lasted on and on, and helped her to love Jesus and duty more, and that it was growing brighter all the time and could never die. She pictured for Rose a happy united life with God's messenger, who needed rest and needed love; and she urged her to trust the good man implicitly and go on loving, and confide in the Master, and all would be well.

And our little wondering Rose, both shrinking and smiling, began to look forward with a strange trembling pleasure to the day when Catherine would be with her and when the beloved pastor would own the lone motherless orphan before all the world.

By and by there were suggestions of Springtime on earth and sky and in the softer airs and swelling buds. In my study the hyacinths were blooming in the crocks, and the impatient crocuses were pushing through the ground outdoors. The martins were chattering about the eaves, and discussing their distant travels, and peeping at our faces through the windows, and wondering if they had been forgotten. And I knew that this was Weston's wedding-night, and the old Stone Church seemed to know it too, and to be throbbing with

motherly blessings. I kept thinking of another Spring-time years ago when another preacher, not old then, was going to be married, and when the whole world was full of nothing else, and when he thought of the expectant bride with thrills of joy and bounding pulse, and when the birds and sunshine were certainly thinking of her too and were flooding the earth with light and song.

Then came Weston to the parsonage and sought the old dreamer, for my colleague must talk with somebody. And he said that he feared he loved the orphan girl too well, and that it was not right, and that God would not bless an idolatry so absorbing. And the old preacher told him to love her all he pleased and to place her image in his bosom prayerfully, fondlingly, next to his Savior's, and keep it there, trusting in God and fearing no evil. Yea, verily; that this was what God meant when he made man and woman, each for each, and one incomplete without the other; and that the more of love there was in marriage the better God would like it. And I saw in his delight at my words, that the orphan child had indeed taken up her abode in his breast forever. And I was almost young again.

As he started away, Mother Howe, far wiser than I, was cherishing the same thought in God's own words — "Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved His Church and gave Himself for it. Ephesians five and twenty-fifth." And then I called him back and told him the Mother's

text, and again he was glad and went away with the Scripture and Rose nestling in his heart side by side, and with his soul waiting upon the tardy sun.

Then Allen Anson came strolling over, and mixed his tears and smiles together delightfully. "I do not know how I could have given my little daughter to anybody else," he said. "It came before I thought. She seems so young. I have not quit petting her myself. While we still think of them as children, they get to be women and think of some one else. I have prayed it over, and it is all right. She will make him a good wife because he will make her a good husband. I gave her to her Savior long before. In giving her now to one of his true servants, it is only giving her to Christ over again. Both are the children of God and both are Presbyterians. All will be well. But it makes a great vacancy in our broken circle!"

That last low plaintive comment is the one sad minor refrain to even the happiest marriage songs. Next came our Tom Gaines. In fact, it seemed to be everybody's wedding day. And the reader must feel so, too. All our community acted as if they had a part in the joy, and I shall not like it if those who have followed my story thus far do not also share in the general felicitation. You who are wedded and are glad that you are, think of the rosy dawn that ushered in your own Elysian nuptials. You who are yet waiting the rising of

the beauteous morn, think of the one dear face that would brighten it most, and in the light of that look, paint our day as sweetly as you please. Then the writer will have little to do but remember his own blushing bride of years ago. And Tom was glad as anybody and wondered if little Sammy would feel the thrill of the neighborhood joy up in heaven. At Catherine's suggestion, this strong man had collected and brought all the needed evergreens to the church. And there were no poisonous vines among them, such as he had once planted around Sammy's grave.

Then Catherine came and was as full of the marriage as any. Her taste had arranged the decorations and made the old church ready to welcome the happy pastor with its greetings of flowery fragrance. She talked of Mary and Julia and the girlish Rose and was sharing the happiness of them all. I saw plainly that she had consecrated herself anew to the mission of brightening the lives of others, and that there was no marriage in all this world for her. Were any hands more fit to adorn earth's hymeneal altars? Had earth any lips more pure to offer prayer for wedded bliss? At the door I saw her eyes resting over the brook among the gravestones, and again I placed my hand upon her soft hair and blessed her and called her daughter. And I saw no tear upon her cheek and no shadow of regret, but only a settled peace. Perhaps our dear girl was as truly married in the sight of heaven as any of us.

A well-lighted country church is a beautiful object upon the landscape at night. To those of us that loved it, our temple seemed like a great light-house on the blue horizon of earth's mariners while voyaging on God's currents towards heaven. The large windows sparkled out in every direction like bridal diamonds and filled the beholder with more gentle fancies to-night than there were quivering panes of glass. And every seat was full, for weddings and funerals bring large congregations. I like marriages in church, because then God Himself seems to be giving away the bride and to be starting out with the two from beside His altars to go alongside through all their future way. Where Weston stood with Rose on her bright baptismal morn, a few months before, in that same spot they stood together now, her arm in his, her eyes upon the floor, her gentle heart feeling as only a bride's heart can. Before the gaze of many admirers they stood; his face firm and brave and shadowless, grave but content and at rest, and thankful to the Great Giver; and the little trustful woman leaning upon him and looking very youthful to us all, but wise and thoughtful beyond her years and very prayerful and very pure and more beautiful than we had ever thought before. And I cherished in my mind and in my heart this marvelously attractive symbol of Paul's great mystery — the holy and eternal union between Christ and His Church. I said,—

"There is a home where unrighteousness reigns, alienation and dissension and sorrow; the old vows forgotten, the tones of tenderness chilled into indifference or embittered by variance; God and duty ignored; the home of cloud and storm and heartbreak.

"There is a home where the smiles of heaven are ever resting; all love and peace and joy and unity; the entire household blended together into one wreath of fondly throbbing hearts; husband and wife as watchful and tender for each other's weal as in the bright memorial hour when the wooer won; the same hallowed ties running on and on into the far years every day more firm and fixed and endearing; not a jar, not one harsh word, not a discord; the Bible there, the family altar there, the presence of Jesus there; all harmony and melody and the approval of God. Beautiful, beautiful! If any know lawful reason why such a home shall not be the home of these our friends, let them now speak, or forever hold their peace."

And there were none to forbid. And then, at my request, his proud right hand sought hers as if in assured proprietorship, and her small orphan fingers folded themselves away within his grasp like little satisfied birds within their nest. Then, with the two hands clasping each other in soft pressure and mine own laid upon them in blessing, we all united in prayer.

"Our Father in heaven, All-Merciful and Loving and Kind, ruling in the hearts and hopes and homes of men, we await Thy benediction upon what we do. Thy providence is very special. Thou hast brought these two together. Thou hast superintended the mingling of their affections and the plighting. May Thine august favor attend their public vows and merge their destinies into one. Make them happy, useful, holy. Crown all their days with continuous good. For Jesus' sake, amen!"

Starting in prayer and trusting in God, they pledged each other as husband and wife, promising to be faithful until death. His assent was distinct and clear; hers was feminine and subdued and confiding.

I said — "God has heard your vows. Henceforth you belong to Him and to each other. This union is sealed until one of you shall die in the other's arms. I see for you no wrongful sundering by the sinful laws of man. I see no iniquitous human decree interfering to loosen and degrade what has been made permanent and sacred by the fiat of Jehovah. I see these two of God's children keeping the divine institution pure and untainted, by conjugal devotion and godly lives. According to Paul, I see the wife submitting herself unto her husband as unto the Lord; and according to Peter, I see the husband giving honor unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel and as being heirs together of the grace of life. Trials

will come, but, leaning upon God and upon each other, you shall be strong for the trial. Storms will beat, but, leaning upon God and each other, the blasts will lull and the clouds will be gilded with light. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost rest upon these united hearts forever. Amen."

And a darling little wife she was, and everybody thought so — the exalted young pastor included. For I suppose that the young Hebrew gentlemen, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, never rejoiced more proudly over their beauteous oriental brides while they led them away to their waiting tents and thought of the goodness of God. And none were more happy in the scene than our smiling Catherine — almost as happy as Rose herself. The embrace was very close and tender as the young bride buried her face for a moment in the good woman's bosom and dropped there two pearly tears. And Catherine kissed her and called her sister; and then turned and kissed Weston and called him brother; and then I saw that a relationship had been owned and confirmed which could not fail to brighten the years.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE STRANGER'S DEATH.

Children's children are the crown of old men.—*Proverbs xii: 6.*

WILLY could hardly get used to the idea of Weston and his sister being married. Rose was no older than he was, he said. She was just out of short dresses. Wouldn't *he* look pretty marrying? He guessed Weston and Rose loved each other; and that was the way he supposed it usually ended. Why, only the day before the wedding, he and she had a romp together all over the house. The idea of Rose being Mrs. Weston. He guessed it was all right, only it was so perfectly ridiculous!

That Willy was to be a minister, was now generally understood. The neighborhood began to feel more interest in him, and he was growing to be a favorite in the church. There was an energy in his character which was certain to advance him in whatever he undertook. Allen and Lydia were satisfied with their experiment. The prophecies of failure and disaster and trouble in venturing to

bestow their hearts' affections upon children taken at random from an Orphan Asylum in the city, had not been fulfilled. They adored the Ruler who had directed their loves and their acts, and had through their instrumentality reared up one of the children to be a preacher's Christian wife and the other to be a preacher. The doctrine of God's Special Providence was recognized as a practical truth in that home. With full confidence in it, they had prayed and expected to be guided.

All anxiety with regard to any objection to Weston's choice, was set at rest by the Sheldons. They gave the young preacher and his wife an entertainment, even larger and more elegant than that on the day of Mary's marriage. The whole church were there, and Mary and her husband returned and helped to grace the occasion. The cultured aristocratic family had thus placed their approval upon the match, and recognized their pastor's wife as their equal. I thought it was very noble. Mary and Rose were often together with arms interlocked and smiled upon by all. Old John Phales departed from his habit and made it a point to be there, his first attendance upon such an occasion for many years. And the old man grew playful and told Weston that he never saw a handsomer or more sensible bride except his Sally. And the young pastor was as proud of this frank commendation as he was of the refined attentions of the Sheldons.

Let me hasten to testify to my colleague's credit that he was no more elated over his lovely wife

than any young husband is entitled to be. I suppose he felt that his marriage was the leading event of the century and that any history of the current period would be sadly defective unless great prominence were given to it upon its pages. We need not be surprised if it seemed to him that the whole world stood still and forgot its own interest, intent upon his joys. And I presume he was convinced that nobody in all the annals of time ever had such a wife before or had been as supremely blest as he. All this was perfectly allowable and rational. So it has been and will be. The ministry have a right to be as foolish under such circumstances as anybody else. If you doubt it, ask the first newly married preacher you may unfortunately meet.

But it must be said further that Weston did not forget his duties to his God nor his fellow men. During these days he was as deeply concerned for the salvation of one troubled soul as perhaps he had ever been for any soul before. Amid his ascriptions of praise to God for the gift of his sweet bride, mingled earnest supplications that the darkness might remove from a dying sinner's mind and that the Gospel light might break in with peace. Upon the highways and hedges he had sought him, and the earnest messenger could not rest until he should be led to the ready supper of his Lord.

The health of the stranger had grown worse until Weston prevailed upon him to leave his cave and accept kind shelter in the Valey cottage. Every arrangement had been made for his comfort,

supplies secured, medical attendance provided, and the Valeys amply compensated by the pastor himself for their labor and care. Weston would permit it upon no other terms. But notwithstanding every attention, the poor man had been gradually sinking. There were those who had thought strangely of the preacher's interest in a common tramp, but the man's soul was at stake and surely this was reason enough to interest God's minister in any vagabond of earth. Catherine had won Tom Gaines to Christ when all others had despaired of him, and this triumph of faith and kindness was a lesson which neither preacher nor people were likely soon to forget.

For a long while the sick man repelled all religious appeals. No, let him alone. There could come no good from reasoning with one who had trampled upon God and His messengers in far more innocent days. There had been holy lips which had said to him all that could be said, and there was no use of worrying now. Some good influence exerted and repelled, was the only clew he gave to his past. His doom was fixed; and all he could hope was to be as comfortable as they were kind enough to make him during the little while he remained upon earth; then nothing was left but to go to his reward. He would be buried without other disclosures and his grave would be nameless.

Nelly Valey, now moving about the house without discomfort, waited a great deal upon the

unknown. A life time of sickness and suffering had made her heart very gentle and kind, and the man seemed to love to have her with him. She would entertain his mind by reading from any book he selected; and one day, to her surprise, he named the Bible, and he listened long and attentively. After that she read to him from its pages frequently. His eyes would follow her about the room, and once he asked her age, and when she told him, she thought that his voice trembled; and he said that he would sleep, and turned his head away but did not sleep. At another time he told her that the medicine seemed better from her hand than from any other. Under her good, genial ways, his roughness seemed to be put aside, and at such moments she would take the Scriptures and read till both were wearied.

One day Nelly spoke to him of Weston's marriage, and again he turned away and said he needed sleep, but she noticed that no sleep came. After a long silence he mentioned Weston and talked pleasantly of him and said that but for him he would have died uncared for, and that he hoped the young preacher would be always happy. Under this melting mood she begged him to let her have the pastor pray with him at his regular daily visit—something to which he had shown aversion before. And the man agreed to it and that day Weston came and prayed. To the preacher he said—"I am not ungrateful for it, although your pleading can be of no use. If I could

pray, the poor tramp would show his gratitude by asking for God's blessing upon you and yours."

A sensibility seemed to have been awakened and Weston was encouraged and told him that Jesus was very compassionate and pitiful—more so than the speaker could possibly be, more so than the gentle Nelly. The sick man aroused and listened. Yes, ours was a God who never turned away from a prayer that was dear to any human soul. Thousands of the sorrowing and sinful had called to Him and been heard. Our Heavenly Father was never loth to listen, was never indifferent, was never distant and reluctant; no, He loved to listen; He inclined; He *leaned* to the poor, fearful, ignorant, struggling petition. There never was a trembling halting prayer unnoticed in the heavens. It was very good in the invalid to feel like praying for him. And Nelly would be pleased to have him remember her too in prayer. Thus Weston tried to familiarize his mind with the thought of approaching the Mercy Seat. At first it might be easier for him to think of God listening to him in behalf of others than for himself. Even God's own children sometimes find that the obscurations pass easiest from their faith when they begin to plead for others.

The stranger had been listening more intently than ever before. He was in the presence of an earnest man. During the last few months the young minister's soul had been going out in great yearnings for the salvation of sinners. And now

the same fervent heart was drawn forth very tenderly for this dying man. What if God had sent the friendless wanderer to this neighborhood to be saved from eternal death by his influence! He told him of his increasing solicitude for him. He pressed the boundless love of Jesus and the infinite freeness of His redemption. Yes, the sinner's cry would be heard. All the glorified in heaven had been heard while they were yet sinners. No poor unworthy suppliant, clinging to the merits of Jesus, ever failed of an answer. So certainly would Jehovah vindicate His promise first or last that the prayers of God's children were often answered after those that made them had gone from earth and their bodies had crumbled into dust.

The weak sufferer suddenly started and sat upright in bed. "Do you say the prayers of Christians are sometimes answered after they are dead?"

"I believe," replied Weston earnestly and solemnly, "that my mother's prayers, offered for her boy years ago, are being answered every day. I believe that an answer comes every time God uses me for the salvation of a dying soul. I believe an answer came in sending me a pious wife to help me in my loneliness. Oh yes, I have no doubt that a petition often descends in showers of blessings long after the trusting soul has passed upward to its rest."

The sick man exhausted lay down again and turned to the wall and said he had better be left alone.

Nelly told us that a good while after Weston was gone, the stranger broke the long silence by saying —"There was one who prayed for me once. I despised her prayers. She died and I thought that ended it." And again after awhile he said— "Nelly, she was a good woman and a troubled one and her only happiness was in prayer. And she never stopped praying for me until her breath went out." Yet again after deep thought, he added—"Nelly, is the preacher right and may the prayers of that sainted woman be answered in my behalf even yet?" The sweet girl told him that Jesus had said, 'Ask and it shall be given;' and that He did not say when it shall be given; but that His pledge could not be broken, and that if the boon asked for in faith is not given during life, it must be afterward. And then she said he spoke no more that morning but she believed he was himself in prayer.

Along toward night he called to her and said earnestly—"Nelly, God is listening! God is listening!" In a few minutes he turned and asked her to find the chapter in the Bible where it speaks of the Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief, by whose stripes we may be healed. Afterward he suddenly asked her again—"My child, is it anything more than just believing." And she told him no, and that Jesus was our loving Friend all the time if we would only think so. After a little he spoke again—"It is so, Nelly; it is so. God demands no pay from bankrupts. He is very good,

It is all for Jesus' sake. I will trust Him, living or dying." And she said that he became as calm and placid as a little child that has been quieted with the caresses of love.

Night came on, a bright night not soon to be forgotten. It was about two weeks after my colleague's marriage. I was aware that Weston had secured board and attention at the Valeys' for a scik stranger, but I was not at that time as well acquainted with recent events in his life as the reader is already. Better provision could have been made for the sufferer nowhere in the land than in that pious circle of God's poor. No one was ever permitted to suffer unaided in our neighborhood, and when it was named in my presence that such a person was cared for, I was sure that the pastor would do what was right and I made no special inquiries. On the night of which I am telling, I only knew that such a man was there.

I remember well that I was sitting in my room enjoying one of my many lonely evenings and looking out of my window through the moonlight over at the graveyard upon the other hill. I was not melancholy. My heart was not sad. I knew it would not be very long before I should go and lie down among the many sleepers. I would not be impatient. I was content to await God's time. But surely the hour of rest was not far in the future. Weston was now wedded and settled and likely to remain here for many years. The church was provided for, and I felt perfectly satisfied to

leave it under God to the administration of the young pastor and our three excellent Elders. It did not seem to me that I was needed longer. Yonder in the heart of the scenes of which I had been a part through so many years, there among my own dear group of graves, I would lie down to repose until the trump should awaken a joyous congregation into life and song. I pictured to myself the bursting of the tombs and the busy scenes of recognition and gladness. True, one tomb was missing to complete the group of eight, but God knew well where my Mary was sleeping, and He was watching her dust and would bring us all together on that radiant morn. Somehow my old housekeeper's Scripture had a wonderful way of falling into unison with my moods of revery. Through the door I heard the words— "Accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure—Hebrews eleven and nineteenth."

Just then there came a messenger to the outer door in haste to see me. It was Mr. Valey. He said that Mr. Weston was at his house and had sent a request for me, if possible, to go immediately. It was unusual for me to go out after night but knowing that my colleague must have good reasons, I wrapped myself up as quickly as I could and we started in the buggy. Mr. Valey did not think that the sick man could last through the night and said that Mr. Weston was anxious that I should see him before he died. All this was strange.

On arriving at the cottage and entering the room, I found already there Allen and Lydia Anson and the twins. This was the first visit the young wife had made to a sick room with her preacher husband; the beginning to many perhaps in the years to come. I was glad to see her there. Lydia and Allen were performing some service about the bed. Willy was seated in the corner; brought with them probably in view of his chosen profession and his future duties of ministering to the afflicted. Mr. Weston met me and said that the sick man knew he could not linger long; that he was composed and trustful; but that he had insisted upon seeing me while yet able to speak. Then I learned that all the others were there also by his desire. Nelly was administering a potion of some kind and I heard him say, "Your very looks do me good, Nelly." Weston brought me forward and told the invalid that I had come. He started a little and then calmed himself. I saw that his face was pale and emaciated and that the preludes of death were there. He took my hand.

"This is kind," he said. "Everybody is kind. And Jesus is the kindest of all."

His voice was stronger than one would have expected. He drew my hand gently, meaning for me to sit down on the side of his bed. I did as he wished.

"You have become old," he said. "There were things that helped to make you so."

It was intensely still in the room. Weston came and stood by my side. Then Rose moved quietly forward and leaned upon Weston's arm. All felt the strangeness of the scene. Nobody knew what was coming. Nelly gave him another spoonful of the mixture. He looked at her and then at Rose and said—"Both just the same age. Both good girls."

Again he turned to me. "I must not wait long. I do not want to tire you. You remember Joshua Arnot?"

Alas, how well I did remember him! It was a name of evil import to one of the happiest households that ever lived. The owner of that name had done more to prostrate a loving father and mother than all other troubles combined.

He asked Nelly to bring the light nearer and to roll up his sleeve. There tattooed in blue ink upon the thin white arm were clearly legible the words—Joshua Arnot.

The feelings that surged over me were not right and I asked God's help and He gave me help and I put them away. I was trying to forgive as I hoped to be forgiven.

"I have done you a great wrong," he said. "It was very cruel and wicked. In a little while the world will be done with us both. Can we meet as friends in the presence of God?"

"Joshua," I answered, "Jesus has forgiven me far more than I have ever had to forgive you. I hope we shall both meet in heaven."

His face brightened. "Nelly," he said, "will you bring me the little wallet back of the bed—my only property under the sun."

She brought it to him. To see this poor sufferer of so many years moving around so nicely and waiting upon him, helped to soften and to elevate my heart. He opened the parcel. He seemed to possess more than natural strength. He handed me a paper carefully tied up and asked me to unwrap it. I opened it and surely enough, there was one of the silken curls I used to fondle in the happier days.

"It is Mary's hair," he said.

"Yes," I echoed, "it is Mary's hair."

Then he handed me a locket and I found myself looking upon the same dear features which went out of the parsonage on that dark day as a victim to the altar. It was the only picture we ever had of our daughter.

"Yes," I said, "it is Mary's own sweet face."

It brought her back to me as if from the angel world. I had received her from the dead in a figure. He told me where she died and where she lay buried. And the purpose was then formed that her dust should yet sleep among her kindred where my own body is soon to rest. As I gazed I saw the suggestion of a likeness which, strange to say, I had never thought of before.

Then he took another bundle and untied it and handed me some little trinkets which I remembered well. A ring given to her on her birthday. A

medal won on graduating at school. A seal with the name Mary on it, a present from her teacher for learning her Catechism. A gold pencil, my own gift, which I had seen her lady-like fingers hold so often. How vividly those past hours of joy flashed back upon me as I looked upon those treasures!

He said that Mary made him promise while dying that these should be kept for her children; and that through all his wickedness and privations he never could get his consent to sacrifice them.

"And now, he continued, I have proved to you that I am Joshua Arnot, the man who stabbed you deepest. At the Asylum may be found further proof of what I am yet to tell. I took your daughter away in bitterness. I restore her children to you in your old age. Their name was never Arton. By a slight change in the last syllable I disguised their parentage. Independent of any act or desire of mine, I found they had been brought to this neighborhood. From spite to you and from a purpose to use them for my own schemes, I continued to conceal their birth from them and you. Rose and Willy Arnot are Mary's twins. Old man, these are your grand-children!"

I had no doubt of it. It was all now so plain. Had not my heart burned within me with former recollections whenever they were near? Had not my soul gone out to them from the very first as seldom to the children of strangers? Had I not told them the story of Mary's girlhood over and

over until they knew it by heart? It was blood cleaving unto blood. It was the mysterious sympathy of lineage. It was God's own law of kindredship.

In a moment the beautiful bride had thrown herself forward and encircled the sick man in her arms. He who had talked to her about her father and had said that her face was like her mother's, was himself her father. How like indeed her graceful form seemed now to Mary's! Willy moved more slowly. From the place where he was sitting in the shadow, he arose and came to me and asked if it was true that I was his grandpa. I said—"Yes; go and speak to your father." And he went, and he and Rose called him father. Then also Weston stepped forward and took his hand and owned the dying penitent as father, too.

"Yes, all three my children! Led to Christ by the husband of Mary's child! So Mary's prayers have at last been answered. Mary's own dear children! Surely she was a saint too pure for a world like this. And here is her good old father, too. Good enough to forgive me before I go. I will tell her that you are all happy and love each other. She will be glad."

His voice had sunken into a whisper, with frequent pauses for breath. We waited a moment listening. Nelly brought him the mixture. He never knew it. There was no further need for earth's sedatives. He was dead.

CHAPTER LXIV.

FINAL FACTS.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.—*2 Cor. xiii: 14.*

AND now Weston is indeed my son. The relationship arranged by the young preacher and the old at our first acquainance and consecrated in prayer, has been consummated by God's providence in a way we could not have conceived. At that hour I little thought there was a drop of my blood running in the veins of any living creature.

The Bible, so full of heart pictures, could not miss that poetry of the human soul which dreams of earthly immortality through the kindredship of a thousand generations. Perhaps the tomb looks not quite so lonely to any of us while we think of living descendants continuing to walk the earth. Has the reader ever found any parents who were able to tell whether their own children or their children's children were more tenderly loved? As

we pass farther and farther on in life and the days of our second childhood draw on apace, perhaps from that very fact we come to be more in sympathy with the young than ever before; and feeling the louder cravings for unselfish bosoms, we find it necessary to leap over the realities of the present and reach out for the needed love to another generation. I can not say whether as yet there has been any weakening of my mind; the reader has all along been drawing his own conclusion; but I will not own that my heart has lost any of its native powers. The day has not yet come when sky or earth would look right without love. And now while the old preacher is writing his last chapter, he gazes out upon a world a great deal brighter than when he wrote his first; and the pleasant faces of his readers appear to him far more cheerful too, because he writes from among the warm affections of Rose Weston and Willie Arnot. And a higher sympathy yet, the sympathy of Him who is the Father of us all, reaches me through the musical words of the Psalmist—"Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children."

A little boasting will be forgiven; If the possibility of posterity could have occurred to my heart, these two are just such as I would have asked of the great Bestower. In place of my own dead Willie promoted to a more exalted ministry, another Willie has been given me, the offspring of my Mary, named for his young uncle in Heaven and fired with the same lofty ambition for minis-

terial usefulness. I see that he is a noble boy, of generous impulses, growing in piety, aspiring, full of ardor, even stronger in intellectual gifts than our buried treasure. Within my bosom revives the pride which a father feels in an only son; and that pride has already taken wing and ventured out joyously into the future and begun to paint it in roseate hues. I am greatly mistaken if the reader will not hear from him after awhile. Every day, going to school or returning, he stops by the parsonage to inquire for Grandpa's health; to talk for a few moments with Grandpa; or to consult about his studies with Grandpa. The two syllables are getting to be very full of pathos and music for old heart and ears.

Anson was ready to bereave his home entirely but I was determined to share God's gifts. Willie remains with Allen and Lydia. The children thus link the two homes very closely together. A part of that great wealth of prayer sheds its fragrance over this way daily. Weston and Rose are at the parsonage. I could not have assented to any other arrangement. Here they will get used to their future home, and there will be but a little break when I am taken up. Passing into no stranger's hands, my flowers will keep on blooming and my birds will keep on singing for my children as they have done for me. I wonder if the reader remembers as I do, the memorable day which the Anson household were spending with us and when Rose and Willie were seated at my table where Mary

and her brother once sat; and how I thought about it then. Now her mother's place is to be Rose's always. Mary's ring is upon her finger and Mary's sweet look upon her face. The young bride has studied her mother's picture a hundred times, and is henceforth better satisfied with the features which Weston thinks the perfection of beauty. Again and again each day, and even before I am up in the morning, I hear her voice ring through the parsonage in some rich song just as Mary's used to.

Mother Howe and Lame Johnny are as glad as any of us. None of our old ladies like to own that they get any older or ever become unequal to their household cares. But the Mother loves to have Rose with her amid her duties because she loves her so; and the latter manages to help a great deal while claiming to learn. The young wife is a far more accomplished housekeeper than she owns. Sensible Lydia Anson was too considerate for the maiden's good to train her up in days like these without a knowledge of those things which would qualify her for presiding gracefully and happily over all the departments of home. As Rose came singing out of the kitchen to-day, where her dainty fingers had been preparing some dainty dish for the palate of husband and grandfather, words of praise followed her from the lips of the old Mother—"She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness—Proverbs thirty-one and twenty-seventh;"

"And she was a woman of good understanding and of a beautiful countenance—First Samuel twenty-five and third."

The May-time has come again, and the hours are soft and cheery. While I write, I see Weston and Rose out in front of my study window seated upon the rustic sofa; and she is leaning upon him, and his eyes are feasting upon her face, and their hands are clasped together just as Catherine placed them in the hour when she learned one of God's secrets and knew they ought to be one. It is very lovely. A river goes out of Eden to water that garden and it parts into four heads; and the name of the first is Affection and the name of the second is Confidence and the name of the third is Honor and the name of the fourth is Piety. For true marriage is a thought of God's; and God's thoughts are always thoughts of beauty and purity and truth, and there is nothing unlovable in them. I see daily these two hearts blending; one happiness, one hope, one destiny; the same tastes, the same pleasures, the same antipathies, the same church, the same God, the same heaven; each absorbed in the other's weal, each happiest when pleasing the other most; adaptation, concord, congeniality, unity; twain one flesh. They are as joyous and gladsome as the two little mated bird-bosoms above their heads. Weston is preaching better than ever before. I knew he would. The family altar in the parsonage has moved up close to where the dear departed are worshiping within

the veil. Lame Johnny begins to think it possible to pray without ceasing.

In sight of my wedded children, I throw my eye and my heart out over the neighborhood, and I see it rejoicing under the auspices of a marriage just as real, just as blessed, just as beautiful. It is a marriage which God himself ordained, and for which He created and prepared and predestined the kingly couple. It is the holy wedlock which brought together and bound into one glorious church our Presbyterian polity and Calvinistic doctrine. At these high nuptials Jehovah presided, tied the two indissolubly, and pronounced a Father's benediction upon His royal children. His unlimited Sovereignty, ineffable Wisdom, Electing Love, all-embracing Providence, and everlasting Faithfulness were honored guests and beheld the mating with august approval. Over this divine union of Presbytery and sound Dogma, heaven and earth joined in rapt congratulations and sung the espousal song; saying, Mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other; and then again, in elevated symphony, the wedded couple joining in the words, Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever and ever. And hell alone rose up to forbid the bans.

Than this system of government and system of doctrines there never was a couple better suited; both moved by the same reverence for their divine

Original, both looking for the elevation of man through the exaltation of the one Supreme Ruler. Through Old Testament days they were trained and made ready for intimate bonds; looking upon each other well-pleased while Moses sat supported by his bench of Elders; growing better acquainted in the synagogue service; and finally affianced and the twain made one forever upon the New Testament pages. There in enduring registry are recorded their divine parentage, their Scriptural authority, their marriage and their mission. All through the Apostolic revelations we can almost hear one vowing to the other— "Whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

The world has witnessed many travesties of this sacred union; attempted marriages of Presbyterianism to something else, and of Calvinism to something else; but these ill-sorted alliances never agree and always end in trouble. As in domestic life so in the ecclesiastical, there are no lasting joys and no true prosperity for mismated couples. Presbyterianism and Calvinism were made for each other, and God's law admits of no concubinage and no miscegenation.

Under the beneficent influence of our Presbyterian Calvinism, I have watched this neighborhood steadily advancing in Christian power for fifty years. It smiled upon piety, and it has grown. It threw abroad its light, and intelligence

increased. It looked upon society, and refinement came. It touched the springs of even material progress, and the community leads in enterprise the whole country around. The history of such neighborhoods always illustrates certain note-worthy facts.

IT IS A FACT, impressed upon all my years of observation, that the God of the Bible rules in the affairs of men. Over the thousands of events greater and smaller, there has evidently been the operation of Mind; shaping the general life, the life of families, and individual life. What appeared fortuitous at first, after awhile became luminous with meaning and with design. Some mighty PERSON has been lifting up households and putting down households. Each glance of retrospection confirms my faith and joy that no loose chance has been playing at random with our destinies. God brought me here, and others here. God bestowed friendships. God filled heart and home with love and cheer. The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. And the Lord hath given again. There has been no event without an intelligent cause. All providences which we were inclined to call general, were made up of many special providences. Waving over us has been a Scepter, held by a hand as merciful as strong. The poverty of the Valeys and the riches of the Sheldons were both a part of an All-wise plan, and both directed for good. Under the sway of the divine scepter, the bad man Joshua Arnot and the good

man Allen Anson were sent to the same Asylum and both upon the Lord's business. Both certainly free, but one Almighty Manager guiding.

IT IS A FACT, that just as we find him in actual life, man is alienated from God. The original taint comes out in the best neighborhoods as certainly as in the worst. We and our children were conceived and born in sin. Whatever the surroundings, whatever the precautions, the innate tendency has been to evil. Not that all were as bad as they could be, not that all were destitute of every moral virtue, not that all were equally wicked. But the doctrine as taught in the Scriptures has proved itself absolutely true that there has been no natural love of God, no inborn leaning to Christ, no native Godliness. Hope Smith was born more amiable than her sister, more trustful, more harmless; and even before her new birth was perhaps more free from overt acts of sin than any of us. But she would have been the last to admit that she was ever for a day free from the burden of a fallen nature. Alas for our race! for the Babe of Bethlehem alone has been born into our world without an inherited depravity and total estrangement from God. Only a change of heart could fit for the Church or for Heaven. Whoever taught otherwise never failed to damage the neighborhood.

IT IS A FACT that no well-balanced mind among us ever claimed to effect this change of nature

through man's own strength. And if unable to regenerate themselves, then were none so unreasonable as to assert that they had through their own ability repented, believed, willed to be saved in God's way, or performed any other act which is a result of the new birth. The best among us felt their native inability the most, knew that without Christ they could do nothing, and were ready to say with Paul—Not I but the grace of God which was with me.

IT IS A FACT that God will be gracious to whom He will be gracious, and will have mercy upon whom He will have mercy. None of us elected to be born among these Bibles rather than in heathendom. None of us originated the succession of causes which brought us to Christ. No Christian among us tells God that we have been chosen to eternal life because of any desert of our own, past or prospective. In all these years I have never heard a prayer which did not attribute salvation to unmerited favor. Our eyes have seen that, although possessed of infinite power and doing according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, yet some of our neighbors God has saved and some He has not saved. Under the same Gospel, some have gone down to hopeful, and some to hopeless graves. The God of Providence is as absolutely the God of Election. When most successful in winning souls to Christ, we have felt most deeply our dependence upon a Power who saves upon a

plan of His own and chooses whom He will. Reuben Wailes and the Professor are taken; Askins and Fluke are left. Willie and his murderer are brought into the same kingdom.

IT IS A FACT, just as certain, that those who have been saved, accepted the terms of salvation voluntarily; and those who have been lost, chose the ways of death. Both know that they are free. In the one case, God wrought in them both to will and to do; in the other case, Christ's words were just as emphatically true — "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." Every Christian was a miracle of grace; every one dying in sin was a suicide. The strong will of Phales was swayed to the right by the wooings of the Spirit; the weak will of Marston held on to its perversity.

IT IS A FACT that the doctrines of God's sovereign election and of man's inability to save himself, have not tended to deaden men's souls into inactivity and keep them in sin. As in the older days, when Jesus graciously put Himself within the reach of the blind and lame and leprous, and when the admitted fact of their being impotent to heal themselves did not hinder but hastened their applying to Omnipotence, so it has been through all my years of observation. I have never seen a soul ready to look to Christ until it had been brought by grace divine to recognize its own utter helplessness and its entire dependence upon God as Sovereign. On the other hand, I can

hardly conceive of any doctrine more dangerous and productive of presumption, delay, carnal security and death, than for the sinner to believe he can renew himself and repent and believe when he please. Calvinistic truth, preached in its purity, has broken the sleep of millions, and, through despair of any ability of their own, has led them to flee for refuge to the one and only Savior. A man complained of one of Weston's sermons on the decrees of God; after conversion, he thanked the young pastor for it as the means of his first awakening.

IT IS A FACT that these doctrines have not tended to sink Christians into Antinomianism and licentiousness. No sane believer in our system has been inclined to continue in sin that grace might abound. Those among us most eminent for piety and most zealous and most successful in working for Christ, have fed most constantly upon this strong meat of the Word. "God hath, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation," says Paul, "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." From the heart I can now say to my people what Inspiration said to the Thessalonians — "Remembering, without ceasing, your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of God and our Father; knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God."

IT IS A FACT that if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Although it has fallen in with our purpose to portray more especially the virtues of certain characters in this story, the old preacher will be sadly misunderstood if the reader infers that Anson and Weston and others of our best, are meant to be represented as without imperfections. No, they had their faults, and made their mistakes, and went daily to God for pardon. Through grace divine their sins will be blotted from God's book of remembrance even as I have chosen to exclude them from mine. True believers are daily penitents. The best Christian life is a struggle toward perfection with its crown in the heavens.

IT IS A FACT, as Job tells us, that — "The righteous shall hold on his way." The arch-enemy once imbibed from somewhere the notion that God's children may fall from grace, and, under the spur of that mistake, he tried his utmost upon the old patriarch of Uz; but Satan now knows better. I have seen Christians wander far, but first or last they have mourned for sin as for their first-born. Sometimes through heavy chastisements; sickness, loss of property, emptied homes; but sooner or later they have been brought back. An Askins or a Judas I. Scarrot may appear to apostatize from Christianity; but in all such instances there was never evidence that they had been truly converted. In the pure May breezes that blow around the old church and over yonder graveyard, I seem to hear the words of Jesus yet sounding down the centuries — "I give unto them

eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand."

IT IS A FACT that God's covenant includes the children of believers as truly as believers themselves. The eternal guarantees have never shriveled up to the exclusion of our offspring. One of Peter's strong arguments at Pentecost for repentance and baptism was that the promise of the same grace and privilege extended also to the children. While we have seen the iniquities of fathers visited upon their descendants, we have likewise seen eminent virtues following households through generations. Our most devoted saints and efficient workers came in the line of pious ancestry. The more we read the Scriptures and the longer we watch the facts, the more we love a system which stakes so much upon home training and home religion and the home altar. Anson was not the first Anson. And we always insisted that Rose and Willy were the children of some praying mother.

IT IS A FACT that those who have kept the Sabbath the holiest, were themselves the holiest. The hallowing of its sacred hours has left deep impression upon individual life and upon family history. Never have we seen its profanation for temporal gain followed by permanent prosperity. Our Church has found God's solemn pledge literally true — If thou turn away thy feet from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and

shalt honor Him, not doing thine own ways nor finding thine own pleasure nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth.

IT IS A FACT that for the highest development of personal and church piety, our distinctive doctrines should be faithfully and persistently taught. No practical sermon is safe which is not grounded in these foundation truths. Calvinism is false to its record and false to its God, when it is not brave for unpopular truth. Failing to declare the whole counsel of God because unpalatable to the carnal heart, it becomes unworthy of its illustrious name. All truth tends to godliness; all error to spiritual detriment and leanness of soul. Our membership are not fully prepared for their mission among a gainsaying world, until they are equipped with the Bible warrants for both our Calvinism and Presbyterianism, and are familiar with the noble record of their victories over ecclesiastical tyranny and all manner of heresy through so many centuries. Offspring of a marriage between Scriptural government and Scriptural orthodoxy so eminently fit, their children have no reason to be ashamed of the history they have adorned and blessed.

IT IS A FACT that while there is in the world a sectarianism which is narrow and mean and noxious, there is a denominationalism which is right, and salutary, and ennobling. I see no evidence

that yonder happy bridegroom loves other households less because he has come to love Rose best. It is sometimes noticed that those who have denounced intolerance the loudest, are, of all people, the most intolerant. My many years have taught me to suspect a man who has become so diffusive in his church love as to forget his obligations to his own. Certain minds, now and then, seem to become infected with a sort of ecclesiastical communism or free-lovism. Just as Mrs. Fluke grew so enamored of somebody else, as to undervalue her own family. No, no—there is a church love which is proper. There is a church pride which is laudable. There is a wholesome and righteous denominationalism. We have had enough of Darby Plyms. We will go on, kind and generous to all, but loving our own mother most for Jesus' sake!

A sweet daughter of our faith, a lovely outgrowth of our Calvinistic Presbyterianism, comes over and joins the happy couple in the yard. The world's favorite charge of harsh austerity and Puritanic fanaticism, urged so flippantly as the necessary sequence to our doctrines, falls down abashed and dies in shame at Catherine's feet. Mild, gentle, patient, unselfish, charitable toward all, her symmetrical character passes along its paths of usefulness as pure and healthful and refreshing as one of these vernal zephyrs. She knows that she did not first call to God, but that He first called her. The more free and gratuitous

the Bible makes her salvation to appear as an act of the divine Sovereign, the warmer burns her love toward Him who chose her of His own good pleasure. With all her benevolent thoughts and kindly devices, and watchfulness against sin, she feels that there is no good within her only as it is put there and kept there by the Spirit of the Living God. Her creed subdues and exalts. It gives lowliness and gives strength. Her conceptions of God's greatness, while elevating her character, adorns it with the jewels of humility and meekness. To her consciousness, she lives among daily displays of God's providence, and thus in constant recognition of God's nearness. Ascribing her salvation solely to His distinguishing mercy, her heart is lifted in adoration and yearns to serve Him with all the influence she has — believing that she is God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that she should walk in them. I can see the sweet, sad smile which would repel the thought of perfection of attainment being attributed to her; for, like her favorite Paul, she finds a law that, when she would do good, evil is present with her. Thus this beneficent free-agent goes on her gentle way, vigilant for avenues of usefulness, and scattering her sweet winning words and looks and deeds everywhere; not dreaming that these are her passport to heaven, but only because the love of Christ constraineth. She knows that she must fall away at any moment, but for God's perse-

vering faithfulness; but she clings safely to the promise that His grace will be sufficient, and she is confident that He which hath begun a good work in her, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Wounded in her girlhood, that wound, under the operations of grace, has mellowed her life into softer tints of beauty. Resigned, submissive, uncomplaining, she kisses the loving hand that bruised, and rejoices in the balms that have healed a breaking heart. In God's rulings she is at peace. The memories of the past are still with her and will be to the end, but there is nothing morbid or unlovely in them. In doing good God has given her a fountain of happiness even beyond the happiness of marriage. To-day she comes over to rejoice in the joy of Weston and Rose. To-morrow will find her somewhere weeping with those that weep. Her cheerfulness is as fresh and fragrant as the smiles of the dewy morning. Like Paul, in his sublime Theology, when she is weak, then is she strong. She is a child of the Bible's formative truth. Sweet, feminine, trustful, working, waiting, her creed has clothed her life with its own substantial beauty and its own gracious colorings. Calvinism has moulded God's own type of womanhood; worth without vanity, self-sacrifice without self-righteousness, zealous service without immodesty, strong convictions without effrontery, human loveliness heightened and softened by heavenly-mindedness.

And now throw open the windows and let us look out to the East and await the breaking day. The battle rages. Foes are still mustering. When my youngest reader is as old and gray as I am now, the trumpets of heresy may be braying still. But the daylight surely comes. The Lord reigneth. God is gathering in His elect. Catherine and the old preacher are on the watch and have caught a glimpse of morn. For me, it will not be long. This aged hand, now trembling as I write, will tremble no more when it gets hold of the palms of victory. Willie expects my coming, and will ask if the young woman bore up and was strong. And then up there, amid the hallelujahs, I will tell again the story of the Calvinistic faith which upheld and cheered and made her begin long since to look like those around the Throne. Yes, it must be almost time to go. God will take care of His Church. Throw open the windows a little wider. What is it I hear? Is it the voice of good old Mother Howe, or is it the doxology of one up yonder amid the bursting light? —

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will; to the praise of His grace wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved!

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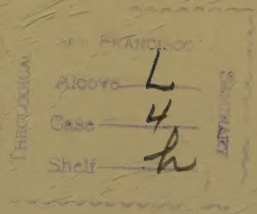
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